

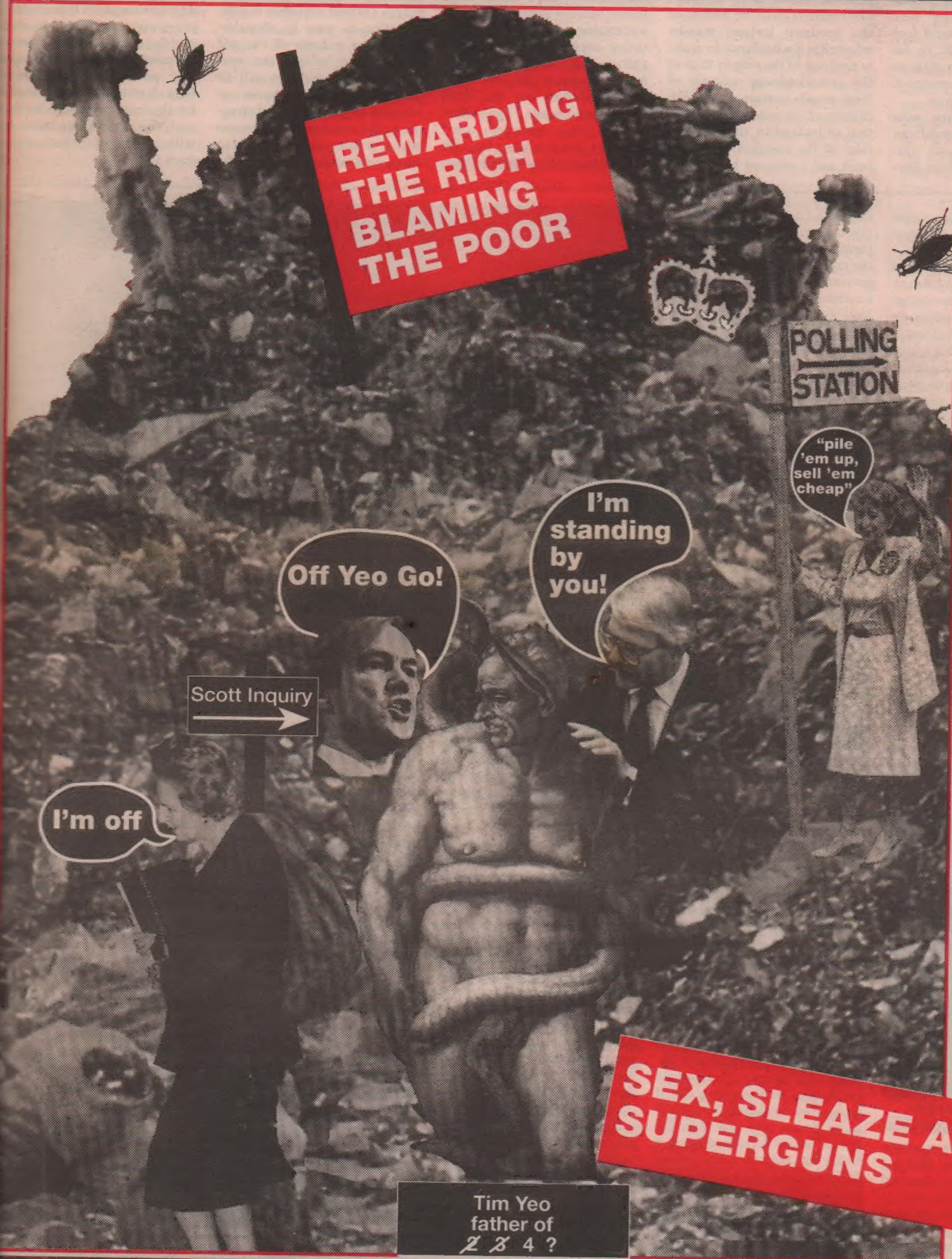
FIGHT RACISM!

FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 117 February/March 1994

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THE STENCH OF CORRUPTION

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price
£1

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Talks on Ireland: much ado about nothing

right to defend themselves against British government and loyalist murder gangs'. The barman of a West Belfast pub made the simple point the night after the Declaration was released: 'The only way there will be peace in Northern Ireland is when the Brits get out'.

Communists in Britain must give their support to these voices: the voices of the working class of the north of Ireland who have borne the brunt of the consequences of partition. The declaration offers them nothing but more repression, discrimination, terror. For this reason we must oppose it, and oppose any 'peace' settlement which falls short of self-determination for the Irish people as a whole and the immediate and full withdrawal of British forces from Ireland. ■

The Joint Declaration by John Major and Albert Reynolds is a masterful exercise in how to say nothing at great length. Britannia may no longer rule the waves but there are still occasions when, with her wily old colonial ways, she comes into her own. 'Facilitate' ... 'encourage' ... 'healing' ... 'trust' ... this is the delicate diplomatic language which seeps from the very stones of Eton, Oxford and Whitehall. It is a language that can give the ugliest deed the civility of a spot of afternoon tea.

The ugly deed in this document is the recommitment of Westminster and Dublin to the sectarian state in the north of Ireland. This commitment is stated quite clearly. The document says that the self-determination of the Irish people is

'subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland'. This is the stuff that had the media proclaiming that peace was only weeks away! It could fool only those who want to be fooled that the British state is planning to right the wrongs it has perpetrated in Ireland.

The men and women who make up the Irish Republican movement have no such illusions. Republican activist Bernadette McAliskey has condemned the declaration as 'a fraudulent document whose political intent is to deceive'. She reminds us of the history of the northern Ireland statelet whose life the declaration seeks to prolong: of the vote in 1918 of the overwhelming majority of Irish people against union with Britain; of the subsequent partition of Ireland in 1921 by Britain; of the creation of a state built and sustained by Loyalist

privilege. This state ensured a Loyalist majority by gerrymandering boundaries on a scale that would have made even Dame Shirley Porter blush. Its nationalist population remains today socially and economically the most deprived regional group in the 'UK', while loyalists are the third most privileged. McAliskey recalls the violence used against nationalists by the British-backed loyalists to keep

them in this state of subjection. The letters page of the Republican weekly *AP/RN* has been full of similar comments. Piaras O'Duill says that the declaration is seen by Republicans 'as a rehash of the old rules under which the new game of Irish politics will be played'. A Newlove warns against an end to the armed struggle by the nationalist movement which is 'the one trump card in their possession - namely the

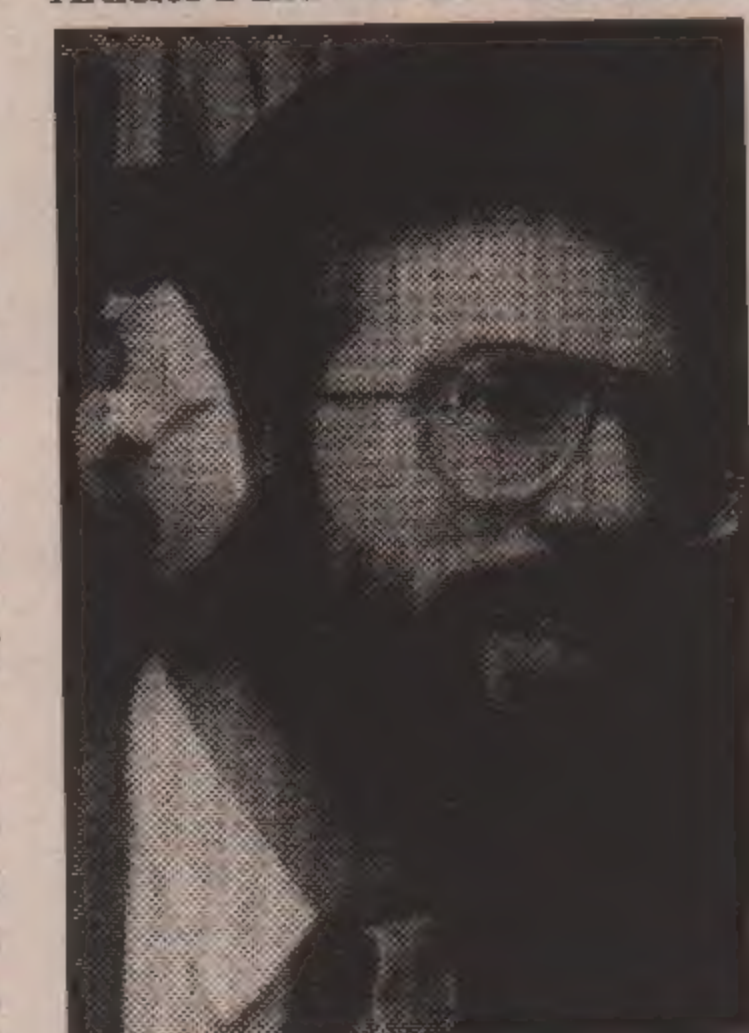
drawal of opposition to the unionist veto which has been the hardcore of Republican policy. Gerry Adams has now declared that the unionists cannot be allowed a veto on self-determination of the Irish people as a whole. He envisages democratic structures in a 32-County Ireland which ensure consent or acceptance. The British are repeatedly called on to act as 'persuaders'. The British record as persuaders of the unionists is abysmal. Remember the conceding of partition. Or the Ulster Workers Strike which was allowed to put paid to the Sunningdale Power Sharing Agreement. There is no reference to what has been seen, rightly, as the only way in which unionists could be persuaded to accept incorporation in an All-Ireland state, that is the withdrawal of the British state machine from Ireland. This withdrawal would leave the unionists without a guarantor of their right to oppress and exploit the nationalists.

Since the hysterical demonstrations against the IRA bombing in Warrington, the Irish Peace Initiative has taken to the streets. Campaigning by Republican support groups, including the defence of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution,

discrimination in employment, despite cosmetic legislation against it; the ethnic cleansing operation, with the collusion of British forces, to prevent the imminent attainment of a nationalist majority; the sectarian legal system which leads to the framing of the innocent; the resumption of torture in Castlereagh and the shoot-to-kill policy of British forces - none of these were even addressed.

On the other hand, reassurances to the unionists that union with the United Kingdom would be maintained unless the unionists wished it otherwise, were repeated eight times. In his efforts to sell the Declaration to Republicans, Albert Reynolds has made great play of its recognition of the right of the Irish people to self-determination. But this right is to be exercised concurrently in the two parts of Ireland. This implies that there are two equal parts of Ireland when, in reality, the artificial unionist majority in the Six Counties constitutes only 18% of the population of Ireland. Reynolds claims that the right of the nationalist people of the Six Counties to share self-determination with the rest of the Irish majority has been recognised. This is nonsense as they are not to be allowed to exercise this shared right to opt for a united Ireland. Reynolds has assured them that the 70-year-long oppression cannot be allowed to happen again, as if it had ceased. This empty reassurance is reminiscent of Jack Lynch's famous 'We will not stand idly by' comment. Unilateral disarmament is being demanded of the IRA in return for seats at the negotiating table for Sinn Fein leaders, without any offer of concessions on the root cause of the conflict or even an amnesty for prisoners.

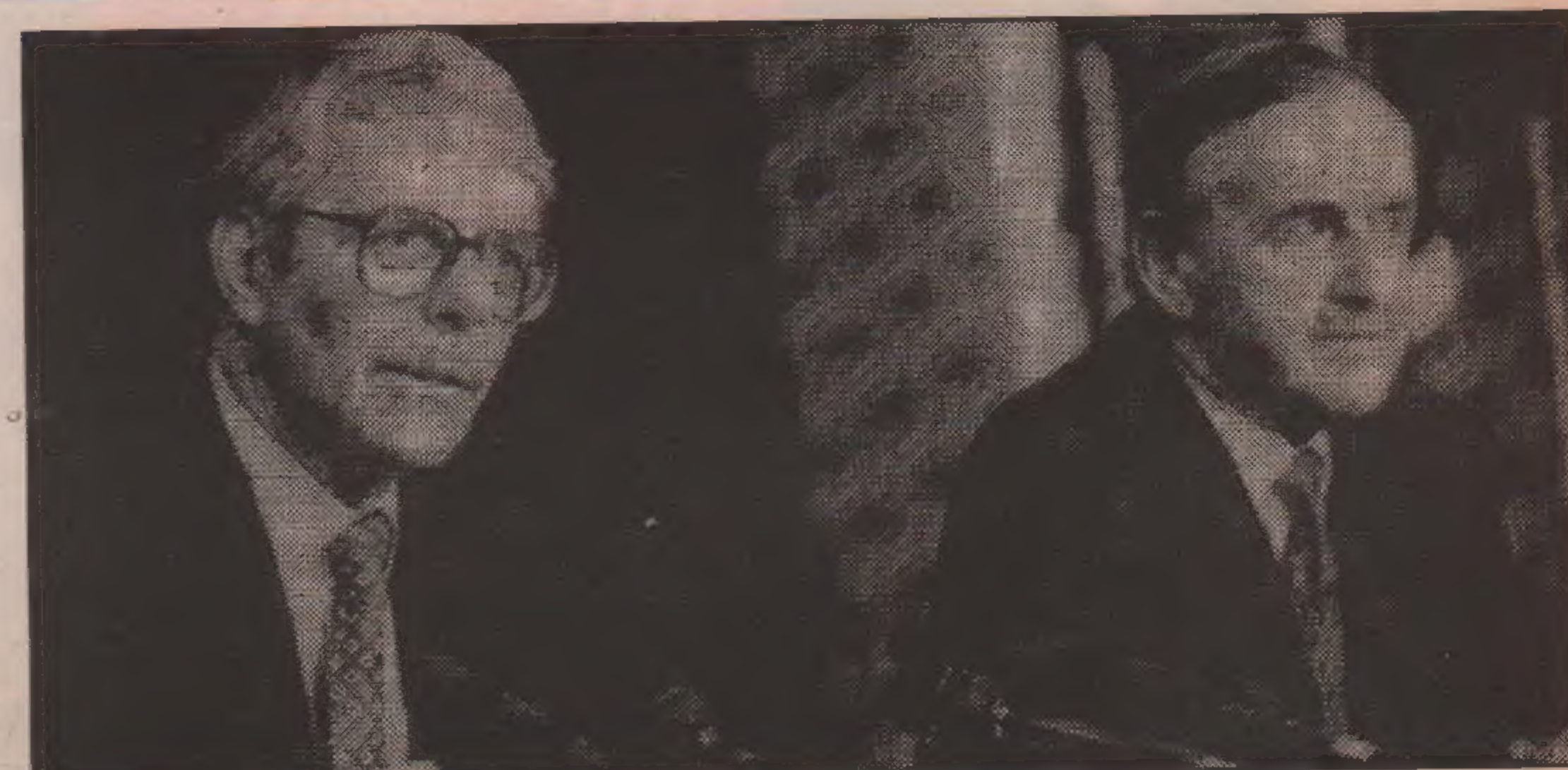
To preserve his new found image of a reasonable, respectable politician, Gerry Adams is 'studying' the Declaration. He is claiming that if he receives the clarification, which so far he has been denied by the British, he will find something in it which 'can move the peace process on'. Meetings to discuss it are to be held in various parts of Ireland and Sinn Fein has set up a Commission to take submissions from members, organisations and the public. The British are officially taking a hard line. They are blaming Sinn Fein's delay in coming to a decision for the continuing death toll in the Six Counties. They are also wielding the big stick, threatening a massive security clampdown. Reynolds and part of the Irish media are adopting a wheedling approach. Propaganda in favour of the Declaration is being peddled. The author of a soft editorial has been sacked. Publicity has been given to a member of the public who, having been kept in igno-



Gerry Adams - broadcasting again

has stopped. Eager to make history, Reynolds and Spring have jumped on the peace bandwagon. They had already approved, if not organised the Irish President's first visit to West Belfast. This visit included the highly publicised and controversial handshake between Gerry Adams and President Mary Robinson. Now Spring has made a secret visit to unionist paramilitaries and produced a six-point Peace package addressing unionist concerns.

The advance publicity for the Joint Declaration by the British and Dublin Prime Ministers raised the hopes of the war-weary nationalist people. But when it was presented on 15 December, the verbiage could not conceal the stark absence of any reference to the nationalist nightmare. The persistence of massive



John Major and Albert Reynolds

rance of the reality of the war by censorship, has asked people to send a letter a day to Sinn Fein entreating it to endorse the Declaration. Significantly somebody in Cork was recently fined for having a poster with the slogan: 'Peace with Justice: Troops Out of Ireland Now'. A survey by the *Irish Independent* newspaper found over 80% of Catholics in the Six Counties in favour of the Declaration. But it is not said whether the survey was carried out in a middle class area or what the wording of the question was.

According to my own reliable sources, the vast majority of nationalist people in a small town in Tyrone and its rural hinterland, have rejected the Declaration out of hand. In West Belfast, where there is total support for Sinn Fein among the working class and constant exposure to the influence of the leadership, a sizeable majority appear to favour it. A few senior figures in Sinn Fein have publicly declared their opposition to it as have some very influential non-aligned Republicans, such as Bernadette McAliskey and Des Wilson.

Britain's attempt to coerce the nationalist people into isolating the IRA with the use of loyalist death squads armed by MI5 has failed. But an acceptance of the Declaration would be an acceptance by the Republican Movement that the IRA campaign, with its resulting deaths and imprisonment, was pointless. A ceasefire, the abandonment of the most successful tactic of the Republican Movement, would hand the British a total victory. The fact that Sinn Fein's electoral support has increased despite setbacks like Enniskillen and Warrington, suggests that rejection of the Declaration would not be as politically damaging to them as the media predict. But for the success of the armed struggle, Sinn Fein would not even be considered part of the solution. ■

Liberation for the Irish people

FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER

The Major/Reynolds Joint Declaration is a sham, or, in the words of Bernadette McAliskey, 'A Declaration to Deceive'. The deception is obvious to anyone who attempts to plough through the full gobbledegook of the document, which claims in the first paragraph to seek 'to remove the causes of conflict' - and then in the remaining 32 lengthy paragraphs upholds the basic cause of the conflict, namely partition and the Unionist veto, which precludes the basic democratic right of the Irish people - the people of Ireland as a whole - to national self-determination.

In 1918 the majority of the people of Ireland in its 32 counties had voted democratically and overwhelmingly against union with Britain. This democratic decision



The reality of British rule

was torn away from Ireland by British imperialism, in what effectively amounted to a re-conquest of six of the eight counties of Ulster, of six of the 32 counties of Ireland. Now the British government has the audacity to claim it is 'upholding the democratic process' by continu-

ing to support partition and the Unionist veto - the very means which British imperialism used to overturn the genuinely democratic decision of the people of Ireland in 1918.

The first Hume/Adams statement in April 1993 made it clear that 'the Irish people as a whole have a right to national self-determination', and Gerry Adams in a recent speech (Monday 3 January) emphasised that 'National self-determination is the key to any forward movement.'

The Irish government is working hand-in-glove with the British government, and is ready to delete Articles 2 and 3 (affirming Ireland's claim to all of Ireland, including the hijacked Six Counties). In effect it has already conceded those articles by acknowledging the Unionist veto. When Dick Spring, earlier in 1993, said that Articles 2 and 3 were 'not copper-bottomed', it was clear that surrender to and 'co-operation' with the British government was being engineered. Since then it has been a question of finding a 'suitable' form of words to make it appear that Articles 2 and 3 had not been totally abandoned, when in truth they have been.

That is partly what the Major/Reynolds statement tries to do - in a barrage of deliberately confusing and contradictory word-spinning.

As communists we have a revolutionary duty to speak out in a manner which does not necessarily coincide with the words of the Irish nationalist freedom fighters (their situation is clearly different from ours) - but our approach must certainly in no way undermine their just struggle. The bottom line for communists in Britain has always been for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and for the self-determination of the Irish people as a whole, and this should be the platform which should unite all genuine supporters of the Irish national freedom struggle. ■

The Choice: Winning the War or Losing the Peace

MAIRE O'SHEA

The British and collaborationist Irish governments are making feverish attempts to split the Republican Movement. Dangling the carrot of involvement in mainstream politics they hope to bring selected members 'in from the cold', provided they accept peace at any price. Following the City of London bombing, the British perception of the balance of forces in the War in the Six Counties changed. Previously it had thought that the IRA could only maintain a containable level of violence but, after the bomb, it became terrified that further such attacks could destroy Britain's status as the world's banker. We have now learned of secret approaches made to the IRA by the British government, although the British have tried to disguise these as offers of surrender by the IRA.

The Hume-Adams, or Irish Peace Initiative was publicly treated with contempt by the British who, however, used it as the basis of the first part of the two prime minister's 15 December Joint Declaration. Though any detailed proposals which may have emerged from the Hume-Adams initiative are being kept secret, agreement has been claimed on the right to self-determination of the Irish people as a whole. But the declaration that unionists cannot be coerced into a united Ireland amounts to a with-

Asylum seekers under attack

BILL HUGHES

One in every 130 people in the world today has been forced by oppression, war, and famine to leave their home. More than 19 million people have sought refuge in another country; a further 24 million have been displaced within the borders of their own nation. The great majority of the world's refugees are cared for in the world's poorest countries.

The response of the rich world has been to erect ever more barriers and pass more racist and repressive laws. The Asylum and Immigration (Appeals) Act, which became law in 1993, signalled that the British government would fall into line with its European Union partners to restrict and remove the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

The detention and subsequent removal of Jamaican visitors to the UK over Christmas, focussed attention on the use of immigration detention without trial. The Jamaicans were held

at the newly-opened Campsfield House detention facility in Oxfordshire. Run by Group 4, this 200-place gaol has been built to cope with the projected rise in immigration detention resulting from the government's 'fast track' procedures for processing asylum applications.

Asylum seekers who have been refused entry to the UK now have only two working days to lodge notice of an appeal. Legal advisors are finding it almost impossible to prepare adequately their clients' appeals. Campsfield House is sited one hour away from any public transport.

Recent months have seen a significant increase in asylum seekers being removed to third countries that are deemed to be 'safe' by the Home Office. Two Kurdish refugees from Turkey were returned to the Netherlands last October; they had spent just 90 minutes there en route to the UK. The Dutch authorities returned the men immediately to the UK. The two Kurds, who had already experi-

enced imprisonment and torture in Turkey, mounted a successful hunger strike in Hull prison to fight any further attempts to remove them.

The eagerness of the British media to embrace 'little Irma' rescue stories from Bosnia, has served to draw a veil over the British government's appalling treatment of refugees. Bosnian asylum seekers, who arrived in the UK in organised 'convoys' or under their own steam, may not be joined by their family members.

Further provisions in the new Asylum Act remove the duty of local authorities to provide permanent accommodation to homeless asylum seekers, if they have any accommodation available 'however temporary'. Even in the event of a favourable asylum decision, refugees will have to reapply as homeless and go to the back of council waiting lists.

This legal racism is mirrored in the operation of the welfare benefits system. Many newly-arrived asylum seekers are

having Standard Acknowledgement Letters (SAL's) withheld while the Asylum Screening Unit (ASU) makes 'identity checks'. Benefits are often not paid until asylum seekers have possession of an SAL. In a deliberate and callous move the ASU is demanding that many Somali asylum seekers write home for official documents. Somalia has no post office, nor a functioning state apparatus.

In 1992 alone, Britain deported 1,346 asylum seekers. The anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Britain has yet to seriously confront the harassment and mounting abuses of the rights of refugees. Fighting racism means giving solidarity and extending material support to refugees and asylum seekers. This work can start in your street, your school, your workplace and your community right now.

Exile, published monthly by the Refugee Council, 3/9 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ, provided much of the information for this article.

Hospital closures – the battle goes on

NICKI JAMESON

On 6 December 1993 the High Court heard the case of Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for Health versus Persons Unknown. Unfortunately for Persons Unknown and the fight to save what is left of our health service from marauding marketeers, Virginia Bottomley won and bailiffs, backed by police and security guards, were promptly dispatched to evict, by force, the activists occupying Ward 2/3 of University College Hospital, London. The hospital was then finally closed.

It remains open in name, as part of 'UCH-Middlesex' (mergers being a frequent trick to disguise closure) and there was even some jubilation when Bottomley conceded a Thatcherite 'tiny little bit' by allocating some funds to Camden and Islington Health Authority to buy services from UCH-Middlesex, rather than from the opted-out Royal Free. But in reality 300 beds have gone and London has lost a hospital.

Persons Unknown, however, did not give up. In reality named the UCH Community Action Campaign (UCHCAC) they are continuing the struggle. UCHCAC member, Norma Hudson spoke to FRFI:

'The group is a mixture of all types of people: young and single, families, middle-aged, pensioners, ex-patients. And it is direct action-orientated.

'The Wellcome Foundation had promised a £30m interest-free loan to University College to buy the hospital building for a medical research centre. Members of our group invaded the Wellcome board meeting and put the case against what they were doing. Miraculously,

it seems, this small demonstration convinced this huge corporation that it might be very unpopular if it went ahead and it is rethinking its offer!

'We are also seeking Judicial Review of the decision to close UCH. They are supposed to hold a series of consultation meetings to canvass public and medical opinion before taking such a decision. The Judicial Review could cost up to £10,000 and we want UNISON the health-workers union, to pay for it. They are considering doing so but so far their role in fighting for the health service has centred around negotiating redundancies.

'The local branch of UNISON is heavily influenced by the SWP and organised the nurses strike but they never supported the occupation and it was barely mentioned in *Socialist Worker*. Some SWP branches from outside London supported us and were amazed to discover the local branch didn't. Eventually they were forced to admit it was happening and support it in principle but that didn't mean they actually joined it! The pro-Labour *Camden News Journal*, which covers UCH every week, also chose not to publicise the occupation.'

UCHCAC holds a leafletting session every Friday lunchtime outside UCH. On 14 January veteran local activist, Ellen Luby was viciously attacked by members of the private security firm which now patrols the premises. Ellen, who is 71, sustained a cut hand, a sore arm and bruised ribs. She is planning to sue the firm, Lynx, for assault.

UCHCAC can be contacted at BM CRL, London WC1N 3XX. It meets every Monday: Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre, Tottenham Street, WC1 at 7.30pm.

Pensioners' Notes

RENE WALLER

Like many other people, lots of pensioners travel at Christmas and the New Year to visit friends and relations, and happily this year at least London pensioners could do so without worrying about an imminent threat to their travel permit.

Mind you, pensioners have not left the renewal of their permits to chance or relied on others to see to it, not at all. Despite the absence of the menacing threats made in some quarters last year, a very substantial number of pensioners from all over London were at Islington Town Hall on 17 December where the meeting of representatives from all the London boroughs was held to decide whether and under what conditions the permits should be reissued.

I found the solidarity shown by the pensioners' movement very heartening. There had been no great campaign to ensure attendance but very wisely numbers of pensioners were there – just in case – ready to combat any unexpected moves. Of course, with local elections due in May we believed trouble unlikely, but I do believe that if other sections of the movement were equally

vigilant our class rights might be in a stronger position. Certainly for us it paid off and our permits will be reissued with no change in conditions.

Well all in all I do think 1993 has seen the beginning of a fight back against attacks on the welfare state. We pensioners have organised two really enormous lobbies against VAT on domestic fuel, but obviously far more needs to be done and much wider support rallied in 1994. Throughout the past year my local pensioners' group has been out on the streets petitioning and we resumed our campaign after the Christmas break on 25 January undeterred by the weather. We shall now be campaigning against any form of indirect taxation since it is blatantly unfair and discriminates against the poor by taking a much larger percentage of their income. We must use every opportunity to get the point understood by everyone. We pensioners also urgently need an increase in the basic pension, so that those for whom it is the main source of income are not forced to rely on means-tested supplements. We shall campaign tirelessly to get this point across, and also do all we can to see 'Community Care' is adequately funded. It is in your



Pensioners will suffer from VAT on heating

interest whatever your age to see that we succeed.

We campaign on the streets but also take every other opportunity open to us to spread our views and had a representative at the recent meeting of the European Pensioner Parliament in Luxembourg. This body has never had any executive powers but has provided a useful forum for pensioners from all over Europe to meet and discuss common problems; we were therefore sorry to learn that this year there was less time and opportunity for a free and open exchange of views regardless of party affiliations. We believe

that the delegates should be elected and not appointed and that adequate time should be allowed for free discussion, or the value of such meetings will be much reduced. Nevertheless, we should continue to be there to take any and every chance to explain our point of view and press for more democracy.

Finally, I'd say that in 1994 we need to recruit yet more members; we're growing but not fast enough. We have a potential membership large enough to compel all the politicians to sit up and take notice: I hope that in 1994 we use our numbers effectively.

On Sunday 23 January, the fifth anniversary of his death, comrades and friends of Terry O'Halloran met outside South Africa House for a memorial event. Freedom songs, readings from Lenin and revolutionary poets highlighted our memories of Terry's political contribution. He is terribly missed as the political world continues to spin unpredictably around. His thorough knowledge of Irish history and British double-dealing in Ireland would today be a great asset. He was Irish and knew that when the British talk about peace it is time to reload. Having lived most of his

IN MEMORIAM

Terry O'Halloran

life in Pinelico he was also very familiar with Westminster council's corruption and would have been delighted with the revelations about Lady Porter et al.

Most of all he would have been writing with relish about the current scandals besetting the Tory government. With his huge enjoyment of Charles Dickens he would no doubt have worked a relevant part of *Our Mutual Friend* into an article on the subject. As he cannot do so, we will do it for him:

'As is well known to the wise in their generation, traffic in Shares is the one thing to have to do with in this world. Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares. Have Shares enough to be on Boards of Direction in capital letters, oscillate on mysterious business between London and Paris, and be great. Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any

principles? Shares. What squeezes him into Parliament? Shares. Perhaps he never of himself achieved success in anything, never originated anything, never produced anything! Sufficient answer to all: Shares. O mighty Shares! To set those blaring images so high, and to cause us smaller vermin, as under the influence of henbane or opium, to cry out night and day, 'Relieve us of our money, scatter it for us, buy us and sell us, ruin us, only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us!'

Long Live Terry O'Halloran!



Last year, UCH workers were demonstrating. Unison and the TUC were forced to hold a national demonstration, but failed to organise a sustained fightback

Civil Servants under attack

As part of its public expenditure cuts the government is launching an unprecedented attack on conditions for Civil Servants.

It is intent on reducing staff through in-house bidding and selling off whole sections of the Civil Service. The first phase of the process is directed against those in support services: typists, security guards, messengers etc. Cleaning and catering have already been sold off.

To facilitate the attack, government Departments were broken up into separate Executive Agencies. The DSS, for example, is now made up of the Benefits Agency, Child Support Agency, Intermediate Technology Agency, Resettlement Agency, Contributions Agency etc with the DSS Headquarters re-

maining as an autonomous unit.

The CPSA's response has been abysmal. Instead of opposing the breaking up of Departments into Agencies it divided the union along Agency lines – claiming the process would protect members from privatisation. Under the guise of a Service First Campaign it has carried out a most ineffective damage limitation exercise of parliamentary lobbying with a designer leaflet and a Research Department to monitor success or failure. Rather than a united counter-attack, the CPSA leadership has conceded the occasional Departmental one day strike – separately, of course. In transforming the widespread opposition to market testing into an effective campaign no reliance can be placed on the union leadership. The workers must organise themselves.

Pam Robinson

No Joke

The trickle-up reality

Remember the trickle down theory? If the rich got more they would spread it around for the benefit of the poor, said the Conservative philosophers. However, money is one thing that does not conform to the laws of gravity. Since 1979 the richest 20% has seen its share of wealth rise from 35% to 43%. The poorest 10% has seen its share fall from 10% to 6%. Unemployment benefit for example has fallen from 41% of average earnings in 1977 to 22% last year. The rich – the real scroungers and workshy – are being subsidised by the old, the single parents and poor families with children.

Feed beef to the rich

The number of deaths from Creutzfeldt Jakob disease, the human form of mad cow disease, continues to rise with 9 of those dying in recent years being farmers. 600 cows a week are still dying from BSE. Decent scientists have been warning since the 1980s that the virus could cross species barriers and that cats, deer and other mammals have died. A recent television programme has now found what may very well be the first human victim for whom there is no explanation other than eating infected beef. Despite all these facts, the government and its tame scientific advisers still claim that it is safe to eat British beef. Indeed their main concern when they visited the victim's mother was to tell her not to go to the press as it would jeopardise the British economy. What they mean is that it would jeopardise their friends in the meat industry. In their interests a major and terrible epidemic may have been unleashed. Presumably far more aware than anybody else of the risks, John Gummer, when he was Agriculture Minister, tried to force feed his daughter a beef-burger. Hmm, Christian family values?

Experiments on the poor

Those who think that Western ruling classes would not stoop to such activities should note the experiments being revealed in the USA. Because it is easier to prise facts from the US system it is now being revealed that:

- Government researchers fed radioactive pills to 751 poor women who sought free ante-natal care in Tennessee. At least three of their babies have died because of the radiation.
 - Schoolchildren in Boston were given radioactive injections which the parents were told were vitamins.
 - Prisoners had their testicles irradiated and dying hospital patients were injected with radioactive material.
- Not until that far-off day when we break into the secret files in Porton Down, Britain's germ warfare establishment, will we know about experiments here. Although the evidence suggests a stupidity virus had been injected into the water supply in South East England.

Children found guilty of fire-bombing Dresden

Every time the James Bulger case is mentioned public figures put on their solemn, caring faces and say this was the most wicked crime etc. The recommended sentence on the two then 10-year-old boys concerned is now revealed as 8 or 10 years. But the lawyer for James Bulger's family says it was 'one of the most terrible crimes this country has ever seen' and demands life. One of the most terrible crimes? By two 10-year-olds in a country in which children are often beaten, abused and killed by adults? Or left poor and desperate in a system created by adults? Is this man completely mad?

More cuts

You will note that this column has not succumbed to commenting on the Bobbitt case. No, nothing at all to say... Well, alright then just this. Why is it that the millions of crimes against women do not merit the same amount of comment as this one, rare example of a battered wife cutting off part of her husband's penis and throwing it out of a car window. Given the levels of male violence against their partners the surprising thing is that the streets are not littered with tiny tokens of the sex war.

M11 Motorway – No Way!

BILL HUGHES

Our beautiful tree was chain-sawed up and bulldozed over; our common land has been fenced off and ripped up by earthmovers. Wooden hoardings, barbed wire and 24-hour security patrols surround what were once people's homes.

More than 350 homes are threatened by a half-mile M11 link road that will cut 8 minutes off the journey time for car commuters from Essex to the Blackwall Tunnel.

The No M11 Link Road Campaign has held public meetings, a demonstration to the Department of Transport and has organised to rebuild and repair many houses already vandalised and rendered uninhabitable. Many more houses are now barricaded as their occupants prepare to defend themselves from eviction.

Blue Tuesday

The depth of opposition to the M11 Link became clear in December as people defended the 250-year-old sweet chestnut tree on George Green, Wanstead. The tree had been continuously occupied for over a month and its occupiers had braved freezing weather, snow

storms and a petrol bomb attack.

On Tuesday 7 December she-riffs armed with a writ of possession arrived at 5am, backed up by a force of 200 police officers, many drawn from the Tactical Support Group. The 150 tree defenders, who had assembled at very short notice in torrential rain, formed a cordon around the tree. Others formed a chain around the tree trunk by locking their arms together inside metal tubing.

The police encircled the tree and without warning rushed forward and began to drag people away by anything they could grab – especially hair. Many people were subjected to 'compliance holds' – which included pressure on the eye sockets, nostrils, ears and genitals. Others were violently punched, kicked and thrown onto the metal and wooden debris on the ground. A 60-year-old man had his glasses smashed and was then stamped on. The police thugs assaulted a number of children directly in front of witnesses, including the campaign solicitor. The battle continued until dawn.

By early afternoon the police and sheriffs were still struggling to remove people from the tree branches. Campaigners blocked

the passage of a 'cherry picker' (aerial platform) by lying in its path. Branches were sawed as protesters clung to them; one woman's wrist was broken as she was dragged from the tree.

Almost 13 hours later the tree was unceremoniously smashed down by a digger.

The focus of the campaign has now switched with renewed energy to defending the houses under immediate threat from demolition. An important victory was gained on 13 January when a High Court judge refused to grant the DoT an eviction order for one of the houses in Cambridge Park. On the same day the residents of two houses under threat declared the Independent Free Area of Wanstonia! A recent article by John Vidal in *The Guardian* commented:

'Work on the M11 Link has barely started and the Government must be nervous that every blade of grass and house along the route will be contested'.

The message from East London is clear – *they will be!*

Telephone or write to the M11 Campaign now to find how you can get involved: No M11 Link Road Campaign, PO Box 956, Leytonstone Delivery Office, 6 Joseph Ray Rd., London E11 1AA. Tel: 081 530 5709 or 081 558 2638.

Further protests at Wanstead

HANNAH CALLER

The M11 Link Road building sites which run parallel to Cambridge Park are reinforced with parallel steel strips and three rows of barbed wire along the top of the fences. This did not stop demonstrators entering the grounds on 22 January.

About 50 people clambered over to stake banners in the ground, occupy digging machines, and form a human chain replacing earth and stones on the ground. Within half-an-hour police arrived, herding demonstrators back over the fence to join a protest on the pavement. Ladders were confiscated, but the drumming and singing continued.

We all marched down to George Green, former site of the 250-year-old chestnut tree. Out came the rolled-up pieces of carpet to throw over the barbed wire as people entered the site. Viciously, police began to drag ladders from under people's feet, protestors' limbs catching on barbed wire. But cheers went up as even while police and security guards were dragging people down inside, more people climbed in. Those of us left outside gathered on the road and pavement, stopping traffic, including a police car that tried to drive up onto the pavement. We held up placards reading: 'Pavements are for pedestrians'. The police threatened to arrest us for highway obstruction, but eventually gave up as the peace-



Demonstrators protest for homes not roads at the Department of Transport

ful demonstration gathered strength.

Time out in Free Wanstonia, followed by regrouping at the George Green site. The police, still present in large numbers, were unable to resist the sudden surge as people flung large metal hooks over the site fences, attempting to haul them down. The fences rocked, the steel bands buckled and the police surged in, battering demonstrators and making arrests.

But the demonstrators will not let up: the road building will be prevented at every stage; houses threatened with demolition will be barricaded and guarded; people served with eviction orders will be protected and supported. The fight against capitalist disregard for the environment must go on and become part of the wider struggle for humanity. ■

Rewriting history

At this year's Annual Bloody Sunday commemoration on 29 January, 'left' Labour MP Ken Livingstone urged the audience to remember that the 'British Army did not go in to "Smash the IRA"'. According to Livingstone, it went in because the RUC and B Specials were on the rampage against the Catholics. Livingstone cleverly squares this reconstruction of the Labour government's real reasons, as opposed to its excuses, with horror at what the troops have done under the Tories. The truth, as an RCG member shouted out, is that the British Army went to Ireland to maintain British rule and the main obstacle in its path was the Republican Movement. But then if you speak the truth against Livingstone, or indeed any Labour MP, TOM will send the stewards to threaten you with violence... and they did.

Class War

SUSAN DAVIDSON

Every teacher in England and Wales will be receiving a copy of 'The Final Report' of Ron Dearing over the next few weeks. He is the Civil Servant who was rushed in to save John Patten's face when the teachers boycotted the Summer 1993 National Curriculum tests. Dearing's report has already been welcomed by two of the teachers unions, the NASUWT and ATL, who have said that they will not continue the boycott. The NUT is balloting its members and considering its position.

What Dearing has done is to roll back the National Curriculum as originally proposed. He has slimmed down the number of subjects to be studied up to the age of 16; he has simplified the schemes of study and he has reduced the method of examination to simple paper and pencil tests.

In taking away a huge burden of compulsory curriculum – Dearing is the teachers' friend. In simplifying assessment and testing – Dearing is the teachers' friend. In promising 'no further changes should be made to the National Curriculum for five years' – Dearing is the teachers' friend.

But in ending the richness and scope of wide educational provision for all – Dearing is the enemy of working class children. In scrapping teacher assessment as the primary method of monitoring and supporting students – Dearing is the enemy of working class children.

The most damning result of the Dearing decision is that the whole process of unified comprehensive education should cease at Key Stage 4. It is proposed that at 14 years the students be streamed into three different types of courses. Academic courses, leading to A Level, Vocational courses, lead-

ing to the BTEC and Occupational courses, leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ).

This is nothing less than the reintroduction of the 11+ exam, only this time state education will grant nominally equal access to the curriculum for three years longer than 50 years ago when the Grammar Schools, Technical Schools and Secondary Modern Schools were introduced.

It is clear that the Academic stream will be composed of mainly middle class students and that it will carry the highest status. The aspiring working class will be led to the Vocational stream, while the vast majority of working class students will be fitted up with Occupational education at the age of 14.

Dearing's proposals, which have been accepted by the Government, sound the death knell to hopes for a democratic and just comprehensive school system. It was never achieved; it could not override the class experience of school children, but the struggle for full comprehensive schooling was a fight for basic civil rights for working class children.

The most honest remark by any politician ever, came from the Conservative Minister of Education in the 1950s Sir Edward Boyle, who said: 'Of course it will always be far too expensive to properly educate the working class'.

The Dearing Report confirms that the limits of what the state is prepared to spend on working class children have been reached. Teachers may welcome the Report because it lightens their load and does away with a lot of unnecessary bureaucracy. But it represents the loss of a chance for a fuller and richer experience of learning. It also signposts the intensification of selection, failure and competition in our schools. ■

M15 plot uncovered

NICKI JAMESON

Liam Heffernan and Martin McMonagle were arrested in February 1993 at Westbury Quarry in Somerset. They had been set up by Patrick Daly, an undercover agent for MI5.

At the trial at the Old Bailey in December, Daly 'broke cover' and revealed that he had been a police and M15 informer for 20 years and had also been involved in the arrest and imprisonment of Peter Jordan, then recently released after serving nine years for another 'conspiracy' case.

The defence team produced strong evidence that far from 'foiling a plot' or 'infiltrating a unit' as Daly maintained, he had been the prime instigator. Kevin McQuillan, a former senior member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, testified that Daly was known as a 'hardliner on violence' who constantly called for more armed action and who goaded Liam Heffernan, accusing him of not being as committed to Irish freedom as he claimed to be. All to no

avail; entrapment is no defence under British law and the men were convicted.

Precisely why M15 decided to centre their first major operation after taking over the 'anti-terrorist' campaign from Special Branch on the INLA in this elaborate and expensive way will no doubt remain a mystery until some retired handler publishes his memoirs. The results are clearer: Martin McMonagle and Liam Heffernan, who killed or maimed no-one and damaged nothing, are beginning sentences of 25 and 23 years imprisonment for 'conspiracy'.

Patrick Daly has been paid £400,000 plus and given a 'new life'. The total cost of the operation – including safe houses, cars, surveillance equipment, heavy security at the trial – no doubt runs into millions.

FRFI sends its solidarity to Martin and Liam and encourages readers to send them letters of support: Liam Heffernan, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX; Martin McMonagle, HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, York, YO4 1PS.

The Labour Party, too, is conducting its own review of the 'welfare state'. It set up a Commission of Social Justice under the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) to discover 'a vision of social and economic progress as coherent and compelling for the beginning of the 21st century as Beveridge's was for the second half of the 20th'.¹ Whatever they discover, if they are permitted to discover anything, will have to be circumscribed by the Labour Party's overriding concern to win back the votes of higher paid workers and sections of the middle class who defected to the Tories at the last four elections. There will be, no doubt, a great deal of soul searching but definitely no 'coherent or compelling vision', which would call for much higher taxes on middle class voters. Already there has been talk of ending universal benefits and 'targeting' the poor by Labour Party 'new realists'.

Various arguments have been put forward to explain the crisis of the welfare state.

(i) A 'global industrial revolution' is taking place and economic developments are out of the control of national governments.

(ii) A much greater percentage of the population past retirement age has placed burdens on state welfare which it cannot meet – the so called 'demographic time-bomb'.

(iii) Family structure has dramatically changed: the majority of women now work and a large increase in one-parent families, usually headed by the mother, has placed much greater demands on state spending.

While all describe some of the real changes which have taken place since the end of the Second World War, none of them begin to explain the real crisis of welfare which has confronted the major capitalist nations from the mid-1970s.

It is certainly the case that 'welfare spending cannot keep pace with the effects of economic failure – mass unemployment, low pay and poverty' (IPPR 1 p1). The issue is whether growing unemployment, low pay and poverty are endemic to capitalism or merely the results of economic mismanagement.

The Labour Party view in the IPPR pamphlets, while acknowledging the deep structural problems facing British capitalism, is that new policies and a new political consensus can be found to restructure British capitalism and sustain state welfare – that is the presumption behind the commission.

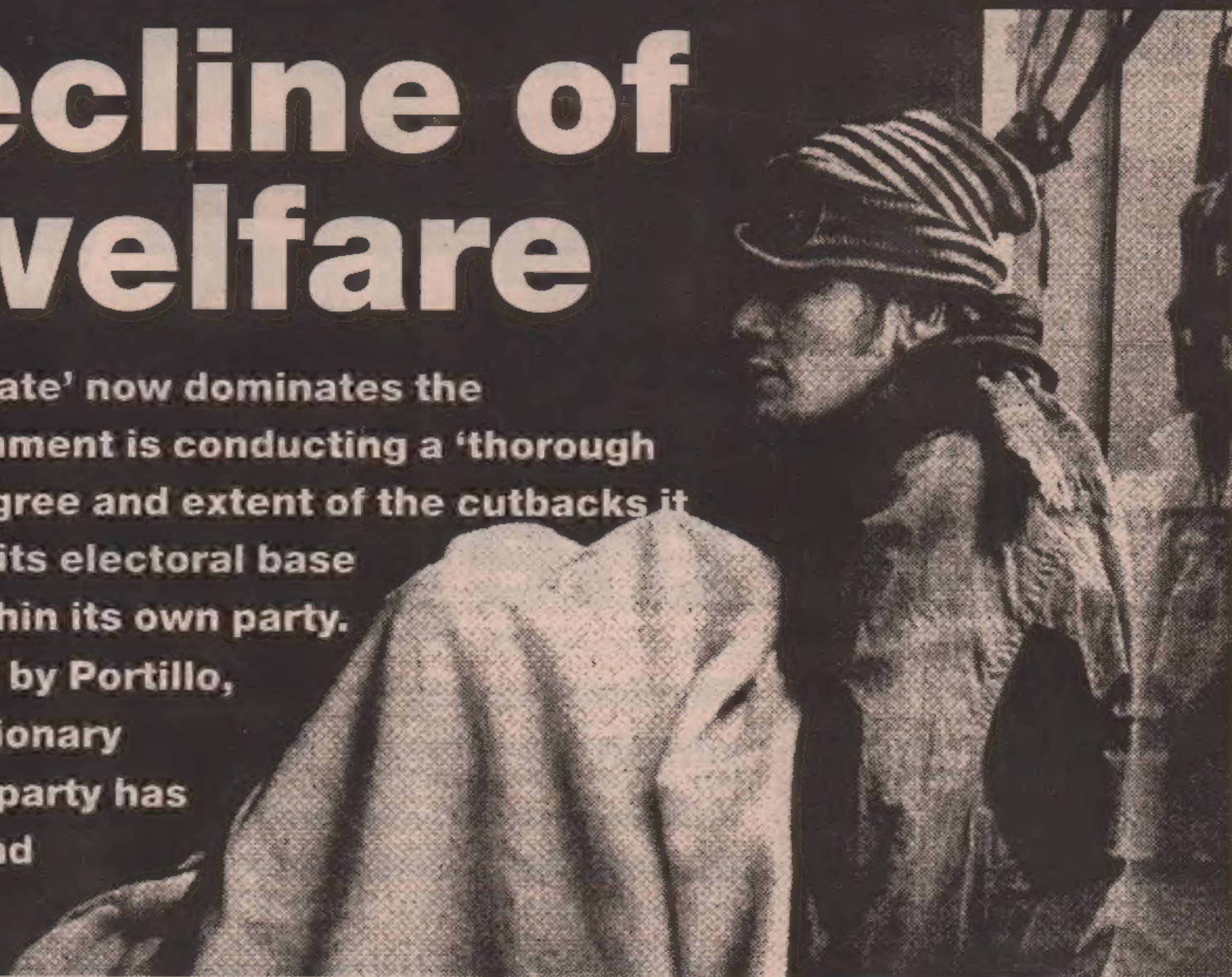
The Marxist view is very different. It has been put very succinctly in a pamphlet by Ernie Trory:² 'There will be no true welfare state in this country until we end the system of exploitation for profit that leads only to overproduction, unemployment and war.' Workers have to fight 'every inch of the way... for better welfare services' but it should be seen as a part of the process by which the working class learns to organise politically to overthrow capitalism and build socialism. 'There can be no such thing as a welfare state under capitalism. The welfare state is, in fact, the socialist state' (Trory, p19-21).

State welfare

Trory is correct to say that when we refer to the 'welfare state' under capitalism we are, in fact, talking of state welfare in the form of social services such as education, health, housing, and social security dispensed and administered by the state either centrally or through local authorities. It is essentially the system of 'Social Insurance and Allied Services' investigated by a committee headed by the Liberal William Beveridge (1942), incorporated in a Tory White Paper (1944) and brought into being by the

The decline of state welfare

The future of the 'welfare state' now dominates the political agenda. The government is conducting a 'thorough review' to determine the degree and extent of the cutbacks it can justify without harming its electoral base and increasing divisions within its own party. That this review is being led by Portillo, the leader of the most reactionary monetarist wing of the Tory party has already caused confusion and discord in the government.



government in power after the war, Labour (Trory, p6). While these measures were forced on the capitalist system because of the political crisis after the war, it was the unique circumstances in the post-war period which allowed them to be sustained in Britain until the middle of the 1970s.

After the Second World War Britain was still a major industrial power with a strong manufacturing base. It was a major imperialist power with access to the protected markets of the British Empire and the flow of super-profits from its overseas investments. The world economy was relatively stable under the hegemony of US imperialism. The latter became the international banker for the rest of the capitalist world. Its loans and investments became the driving force behind the post-war boom.

The right to exploit people for profit cannot be tolerated if there is to be social security

Today the situation is very different. Britain's manufacturing base has been devastated. There are now only 4.4 million employed in manufacturing compared with 8.8 million in 1965. US economic domination has ended. The world economy is becoming increasingly unstable. International rivalries are increasing, trade wars are becoming more likely as the world economic crisis forces the major capitalist blocs to fight each other over profitable markets and investment outlets throughout the world. The European Community itself faces pressures that could split it apart. This is the context in which Britain, a rapidly declining imperialist power, has to solve the crisis of its economy and state welfare.

State welfare is financed out of national insurance payments and general taxation. It was the price the capitalist class had to pay for social stability and the political integration of the working class in the post-war period. Trory calls it a social wage, an addition to the money wage of workers. This is misleading as very little of this expenditure contributes to the value of labour power of productive workers.³ Nevertheless, however you regard it, it is, in the main, a deduction from the mass of profits in the hands of private capital arising from the exploitation of the working

class. That is why the state tries to keep this expenditure down to the politically acceptable minimum. It will also try and devise taxation policies to reduce the net money wage of workers and redistribute wealth back to the capitalist class. Workers, on the other hand, will fight for real net wage increases to stop this happening.

The higher paid workers and the middle classes will, in the main, have much greater tax deductions from their gross wages than the lower paid. As a result there is some redistribution of net benefits to the poorer sections of the working class. This is confirmed by a recent study of the mid-1980s which shows that while most income groups receive almost equal gross benefits from state welfare, the bottom five income groups receive more than they contribute and the top four pay more than they receive with the sixth breaking even. On average three quarters of what the 'welfare state' does smooths out income over a lifetime – a 'savings bank' effect – and one quarter is redistributed from better-off workers to poorer ones.⁴

As long as sufficient profits are produced to return an adequate rate of profit on capital invested and to finance state welfare, then the social democratic consensus of the post war years could be maintained. It was possible to guarantee the relatively privileged conditions of higher paid workers and the middle classes while sustaining adequate living standards for the mass of the working class. However as soon as the rate of profit began to fall – an inevitable consequence of the process of capital accumulation – then the consensus began to break apart. Unemployment and poverty started to grow. And at the very moment when increased state spending was needed, state spending was blamed for the crisis. The myths of Keynesianism were exposed. In the mid-1970s the Labour Party set monetary targets and cut state spending. It was to little avail. The low paid workers fought back and the 'winter of discontent' drove the higher paid skilled workers and the middle classes into the embrace of the Tory Party. These more privileged layers of the working class and middle classes put their own material interests before those of growing numbers of low paid workers and the poor. On four consecutive occasions they chose to vote for the party that made a virtue of slashing state spending and lowering taxes under the cover of 'sound finances'.

The laws governing the development of the capitalist system of production, however, dramatically

swept aside the 'sound finances' of the Tory monetarists, just as they had done with Keynesian demand management. It is ironic that today many previously well-paid workers who deserted to the Tories face higher taxes, lower living standards, the ever growing threat of unemployment and poverty with increasingly inadequate public services, while state spending and taxation are at a higher level than when the Tory Party was elected in 1979.

Capitalist Britain – 12 million in poverty

Beveridge made the assumption that governments would be committed to maintaining high employment – under 8.5 per cent unemployment in the 1942 Report, and no more than 3 per cent in his 1944 *Report Full employment in a free society* (p160) – with unemployment over six months a rare thing. Since 1981 the official unemployment rate for men has been above 8.5 per cent. The real rate has certainly been much higher. The communist member of Parliament Willie Gallacher said at the time of Beveridge's Report that the proposed scheme would fall to pieces with mass unemployment (Trory p10). Gallacher was right.

At the time of the Beveridge Report less than 10 per cent of the population were over 65. In 1991 pensioners made up 16.5 per cent of the population, by 2041 they will make up 24 per cent. Do we face a so-called 'demographic time-bomb'?

A social system which cannot guarantee a decent and secure old age to pensioners has outlived its social usefulness

If the earnings link were restored – pensions rising with average earnings rather than the much lower prices – and taking into account the rise in the number of pensioners, the additional cost by 2030 to be found from taxation and/or national insurance would be about 2.3 per cent of GDP. This is no greater than the effect of the recession on welfare spending over the past three years (TFOW p78). The 'demographic time-bomb' argument is little more than a cover for capital's real intent to impoverish those it has no further use for.

With pensions increasing only with prices since 1982, the state pension reached a peak of 46.5 per cent of average income in 1983. By 1992 it was lower than it had been in 1948. At present it is worth 15 per cent of average gross male earnings – the lowest since such figures have been calculated (since 1971) (TFOW pp51-2). This process is not sustainable. A social system which cannot guarantee a decent and secure old age to pensioners has outlived its social usefulness.

Capitalist Britain has 12 million people living in poverty – 22 per cent of the population. One sixth of the population rely totally on income support, which is below the level regarded as 'modest but adequate' to live on (TFOW p46). Unemployment benefit and state pensions are lower in relation to general living standards than they were in 1948, while there has been a massive redistribution of income from the poor to the rich.

Under the cover of improving the efficiency of public services, corruption and fraud have become regular features of public life with the privatisation of state services and the introduction of competitive tendering. Large sums of taxpayers' money are handed to those companies which can get in on the act. 'The contracting-out of public services to private firms is likely to trigger an explosion of fraud and corruption,' warn the top accountants Peak Marwick. And the Commons Public Accounts Committee tells us that millions of pounds of public money have been lost in waste and fraud. There is not only a decline in the quality of public services but also in the conditions and wages of the workers providing the services as companies which win competitive bids make unprecedented profits.

Fifty years ago the communist Willie Gallacher said that the only foundation for a welfare state is a socialist one. 'The right to exploit people for profit cannot be tolerated if there is to be social security' (Trory p10). Fifty years of state welfare under capitalism have proved him right!

David Yaffe

1. *The Justice Gap* (IPPR 1) and *Social Justice in a Changing World* (IPPR 1993)
2. Ernie Trory *The Social Wage* Crabtree Press 1992. Copies from 4 Portland Avenue, East Sussex, BN3 5NP £2 + 40p p&p
3. See Paul Bullock and David Yaffe 'Inflation, the Crisis and the Post-War Boom' in *Revolutionary Communist* 3/4 Larkin Publications 1975, reprinted 1979 £3.50 incl p&p
4. John Hills with the LSE Welfare State Programme *The future of welfare A guide to the debate* (TFOW) Joseph Rowntree Foundation November 1993

When first the Supergun parts were impounded in 1990 and when the Matrix Churchill trial collapsed in 1992, it was clear that a scandal was in the making. Britain had been selling arms to Iraq despite an embargo on arms sales, ministers had lied to Parliament about this and some of these weapons had been used against British and other forces in the Gulf war. However, all this worried government 'critics' less than the fact that three businessmen from Matrix Churchill, one of them an intelligence agent, had been prosecuted for supplying weapons-making equipment to Iraq. Moreover the prosecution had gone ahead despite the firm having ministerial approval for the sale and various ministers had then signed Public Interest Immunity certificates to prevent these facts coming out.

The government responded to the outcry from patriotic sympathisers of the plight of the Matrix Churchill 3 by setting up the Scott Inquiry which has gone on for so long that even its more sensational days do not relieve the fog of irrelevant detail and crushing boredom that has overtaken the issues. It is virtually impossible – as it was meant to be – for the public to follow or grasp what is being done at the Scott Inquiry, even leaving aside the fact that there are hardly any seats for the public at this event and tape recorders are banned. To follow the facts being exposed would require both an active and critical press and a political opposition with the ability and desire to cut through the detail and reveal the essence of the scandal. Britain has neither.

Britain's armaments industry is massive and it sells its deathly merchandise with the full and wholehearted backing of government. It is renowned for its corrupt relations with governments and with the middlemen who facilitate arms deals. It treats any hindrance to its sales, such as public revulsion at the crimes of apartheid South Africa or the gas attacks on Kurds by Iraq, with complete contempt. It has the wealth, as the Iraqgate scandal shows, to subvert the paper policies of Parliaments. And yet the Scott Inquiry is narrowly concerning itself with the question of whether guidelines preventing the sale of arms to Iraq were changed, who knew about the change and who authorised it. This is rather like investigating who dropped a piece of litter on the Municipal Rubbish Dump. The real issue – the overwhelming power of the arms industry and its automatic corruption of all it touches – is being ignored.

Armaments: the money machine

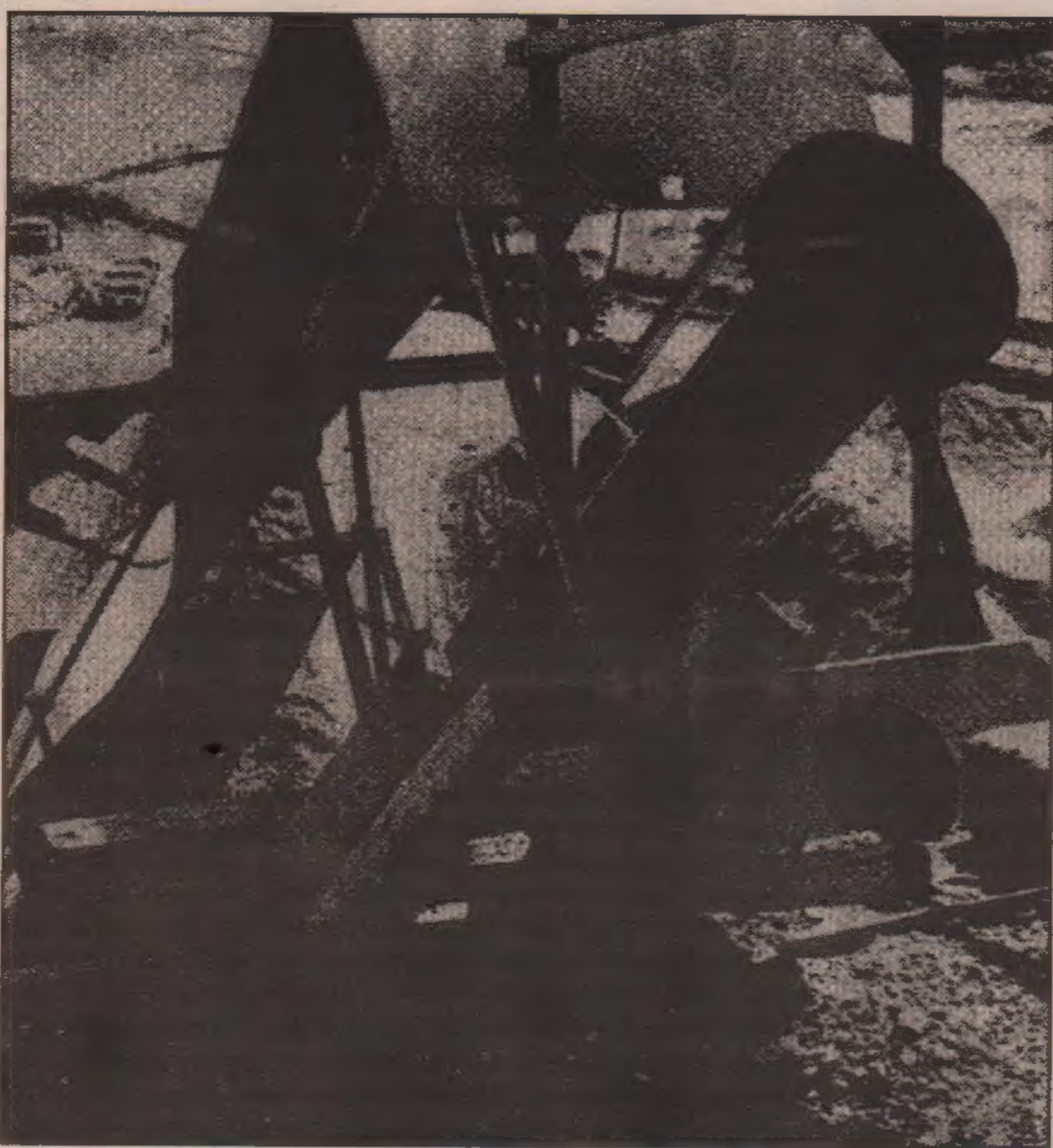
'I came into the House thinking politics was about ideas. Politics is about money. You decide about the money, and then make the ideas fit.' (Anonymous Conservative MP quoted in the *Independent* 1990)

'No my friend, you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us and keep peace when it doesn't ... When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and the military. And in return, you shall have the support of my newspapers and the delight of imagining you are a great statesman.' (An armsmaker to a government minister in Shaw's play *Major Barbara*)

In 1987 the countries of the world spent \$45,930 million importing arms. More than two thirds of this was spent by poor or developing countries. A large part of this hugely profitable market was in the hands of US, Britain and other European countries. The British companies involved are household names: Vickers, British Aerospace, Lucas, Royal Ordnance, Marconi, RACAL, Rolls Royce, Thorn-EMI, GEC. Of the top twenty companies in Britain, 11 are involved in military production

The Scott Inquiry: what a tangled web they weave

The Scott Inquiry into the arms-to-Iraq cover-up shows that, whilst the current government may be floundering, the British ruling elite has lost none of its instinctive ability to obscure embarrassing realities. MAXINE WILLIAMS reports.



The Iraqi Supergun – supplied by the British

as are 1 in 10 of manufacturing workers.

All British governments, Labour and Tory alike, have had close ties with the defence industry. Those links became even more intimate under the Conservative governments since 1979. There is so much overlap between the personnel of large defence companies and the government that they are effectively one and the same. For example, Sir Colin Chandler, former marketing director of British Aerospace, became head of the MoD's sales division, the Defence Export Services Organisation, for a crucial period in the 1980s, and is now safely returned to being Chief Executive of Vickers. The current Defence Procurement minister is Jonathan Aitken who was previously head of an arms company with Middle East connections.

The arms companies donated to Conservative funds and were one part of British manufacturing industry in which the Tories displayed a keen and sympathetic interest. Indeed at a lavish 1991 arms bazaar in Paris, one of the heads of the French air arms industry crowed: 'You've lost your best arms salesman of all – Mrs Thatcher.'

Leaving aside the issue of arms to Iraq, many of Mrs Thatcher's other arms-related skeletons are now tumbling out of the closet – the arms-for-aid deal with Malaysia signed in 1985, the Al Yamammah arms deal with

Saudi Arabia worth £20bn, and last but not least the fascinating but rarely explored question of her son Mark's relation with arms dealing in the Middle East.

While the world was spending its \$45bn on arms exports in 1987, one country stood in a class of its own as a big spender – Iraq. That year alone it spent \$5.6bn importing arms, and the arms companies of the world fell over themselves to get a share of the Iraqi arms market, estimated at \$80bn from 1980-90. The Iraq/Iran war of 1980-88 may have claimed over one million lives but it was a golden opportunity for the arms companies. The lure was to prove irresistible.

Not selling arms: a new definition

Every government department involved in foreign trade was under intense pressure from the arms companies to exploit the Iraq/Iran market. Public pressure against arming Iran and Iraq had resulted in guidelines drawn up by Geoffrey Howe when Foreign Minister. These guidelines, agreed in 1984 but not revealed for almost a year, claimed that the UK had been 'strictly impartial' in the Iran/Iraq war 'and had refused to allow the supply of lethal defence equipment to either side.' Guideline No 3, in which Scott is interested, said: 'We should not

in future approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict.'

Not only were the guidelines so framed as to allow exports with a potential military use, but they anyway were not worth the paper they were written on. They were simply for the consumption of the mugs in Parliament. The real business of government, selling deadly weapons, went on unimpeded by such niceties and the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry, the intelligence services, all conspired to ensure they were ignored. In 1988 they were 'relaxed' but apparently all relevant ministers other than Alan Clark were too busy to notice this or inform Parliament.

Whilst Britain was being 'strictly impartial' and not selling defence equipment to Iraq, the following few items managed to escape the net: 'known and easily identifiable raw ingredients for chemical weapons, sodium cyanide and sodium sulphide ... plutonium, zirconium, thorium oxide, gas spectrometers, all essential for nuclear technology; explosives; electronic surveillance equipment ... ; pistols, rifles, shotguns, artillery fire control and fast assault craft and night vision equipment.' (John Sweeney, *Trading with the Enemy*)

In the mid-1980s Customs documents show that Royal Ordnance (a previously nationalised industry whose sole shareholder in the mid 1980s was Michael Heseltine) took part in a European explosives cartel which sold explosives to both Iran and Iraq whilst such trade was embargoed. Only the British government and the arms companies know precisely what was sold to Iraq and how much it was worth. But the Scott inquiry has not called any of the arms industry executives.

What is known is that Britain provided £3.5bn of export credits for Iraq in the 1980s of which £1bn was defaulted on and the bill paid by the British taxpayer ie Iraq got its arms for nothing and the arms companies were paid by the British public.

Also known is the fact that during the 1980s all Trade ministers either visited Iraq or hosted missions from Iraq. Ministers included John Biffen, Paul Channon, Alan Clark, Tony Newton, John Wakeham and Lord Trefgarne. Other ministers to visit Iraq were David Mellor (three times) and William Waldegrave, Foreign Office Minister in 1989. At the 1989 Baghdad Military Exhibition, the following British arms firms set out their wares: Astra, British Aerospace, Defence Manufacturers Association, Errut, GEC Avionics, Gravinier, Mantech, Matrix Churchill, Olympus KMI, Racal, Rapid Metal

Developments, Rolls Royce, Rotabroach, Strumech Engineering, Thorn EMI and United Scientific Holdings. Oh yes, and the Ministry of Defence was there. This was while Britain was not selling arms to Iraq and only one year before the national interest demanded that British and other allied forces liberate 'gallant little Kuwait'.

In the face of this it is hard to comprehend the scale of hypocrisy which lies behind setting up the Scott inquiry.

The Matrix Churchill debacle

The Matrix Churchill machine tools company was, as is often forgotten, sold to the Iraqis in 1987. The deputy chairman of the group of companies which owned Matrix Churchill was Sir John Cuckney, a former MI5 officer, and the company had two British intelligence agents on its payroll. The Scott Inquiry has been told that the justification for Matrix selling its goods to Iraq was in order to gain intelligence. The politicians, such as Thatcher, have said that they never saw this intelligence. Either way it is the case that UN inspectors found Matrix Churchill parts in Iraq's nuclear weapons plant. However, they also found parts from nine other British machine tool companies. So unless all machine tool companies are MI5/6 operations, the justification for Matrix Churchill wears a little thin. It is, in fact, a historic justification for arms dealers and was used by the daddy of them all, Sir Basil Zaharoff, who helped arm Germany for the First World War on the grounds that it gave him intelligence which Britain could use. He was duly knighted.

By 1989 the process that had allowed British armaments to flow secretly to Iraq was fraying. An intelligence report warned ministers: 'All it needs is for an investigative journalist to pull together the threads.' One journalist investigating the Iraq weapons procurement network was found dead in suspicious circumstances in Chile in March 1990. Dr Gerald Bull, inventor of the supergun, was also killed that month, shot outside his Belgian flat. In 1990 the supergun parts were seized by Customs. Panic set in and a top civil servant wrote to Nicholas Ridley: 'Customs have prima facie evidence that current machine tools exports from Matrix Churchill and other UK companies under licence are being routed via Chile to Iraq for arms manufacture. Evidence was available in 1987 to the same effect ... An investigation will clearly bring these to light.'

By October 1990 the three Matrix men had been arrested and the whole matter became conveniently *sub judice*. Since their acquittal the relevant ministers and ex-ministers have only had to face questioning at the Scott Inquiry rather than a House of Commons Select Committee. They have all acquitted themselves poorly at the Inquiry. Thatcher couldn't remember anything despite the documents which refer to the need for her approval on arms to Iraq policies. Major never saw anything. Waldegrave 'didn't change the guidelines because he didn't tell Parliament he had changed them. Even Alan Clark was unusually diplomatic, saying that intelligence sources required that equipment be supplied to Iraq. Howe had a tantrum, perhaps caused by the embarrassment of his minute being revealed saying: 'It would look very cynical if so soon after expressing outrage about the treatment of the Kurds [by 'treatment' Howe meant gassing], we adopt a more flexible approach to arms sales.' His solution had been to keep the decision secret so that nobody thought he was cynical.

Well, what can they say? The truth, as one civil servant told Scott, 'is a very difficult concept.' On the contrary, it is very simple. 'British governments are the marketing managers of big corporations. They don't come any bigger than the arms corporations and they, along with other companies, own the government, its civil servants and its intelligence services. It hardly needs a lengthy inquiry to reach this conclusion. ■

Before Christmas, Prime Minister Major thought he had stitched together a united Tory Party. Tough measures had been announced against the 'something for nothing' society – it was Back to Basics with more prisons, lower state benefits, a war against crime, etc, etc. The economy was said to be looking-up and a peace-deal for Ireland promised to rescue Major's reputation, even if it meant talking to the 'godfathers of evil' and then lying about it. But it was all a mirage. Even before the green shoots had withered along with the Irish peace deal, scandal after scandal revealed just how divided the Tories really are.

First came Tim Yeo, Secretary of State for the Environment, who had fathered an illegitimate child with a London Tory councillor. He would not resign, he said; he had the support of the PM who said it was just an indiscretion; his wife was standing-by-him. So far so good for the average sex scandal (with the added spice

A greedy, sleazy elite

It is always good for our morale to witness the Tory Government squirming, and throughout January it did little else. Sexual scandals have a prurient appeal for the British press, and indeed many of their readers. Denied the Royal target now that Princess Di has 'retired' from public life, the Queen is paying tax and Fergie is climbing mountains, it appeared that the press had turned on the other ranks of public figures who despite their ill-deserved and often ill-gotten publicly-funded privileges, claim to have private lives – Government ministers and MPs. Hours of broadcast time and miles of newsprint have been devoted to the thorny question of whether these men have the right to fornicate in private while remaining on the job, as it were.

But behind the moral turpitude there is a far more serious reality. CAROL BRICKLEY argues that this greedy and sleazy elite is not just pontificating hypocritically about moral values, it is using its moral crusade to justify a vicious attack on the living standards of the working class in Britain. As has always been the case under capitalism, moral values are just the top dressing.

junior transport minister, broken hearted at her husband's infidelity (according to her father), blew her brains out on a Saturday night. Not only were ministers falling like nine-pins, the Tory Party was split down the middle about how seriously these 'indiscretions' should be treated.

Their morals and ours

'... What is good for the Ruling Class must also be good for the whole of society, with which the Ruling Class identifies itself. Therefore the more civilisation advances, the more it is compelled to cover the evils it necessarily creates with the cloak of love and charity, to palliate them or to deny them – in short to introduce a conventional hypocrisy...'

Frederick Engels

In different circumstances Yeo et al

might have expected to survive the revelations. Profumo, the War Minister who sealed the fate of the Macmillan government in 1963, was forced to resign because he lied to Parliament, not for his sexual picaresques with Christine Keeler. After all, a large section of the Tory elite had cavorted around the pool at Clivedon with prostitutes. Cecil Parkinson might well have survived in office if only he hadn't falsely promised marriage to Sarah Keyes. Mellor bit the dust because of his football gear and his wife's family did not stand-by-him. And Paddy Ashdown even saw a rise in popularity after disclosure of his extra marital activity. But times changed in the Summer of 1993.

Major's Back to Basics policy, intended to heal the divisions in the Tory Party post-Maastricht, was precisely the moral crusade that the

right of the party – Lilley and Portillo in particular – desired. A series of Tory ministers had seized the opportunity to vilify the moral decline of the British masses. Great swathes of Tory supporters across the Home Counties had grasped the new puritanism to their bosoms. The Tory press – more in tune with Tory rank-and-file than Major – were quick to turn against the Prime Minister when he failed to sack Yeo and tried to dilute the moral content of Back to Basics. If Back to Basics was just a campaign for 'good manners', then, as one Tory MP pointed out, 'John Smith would agree with that!'

The tabloid press had not suddenly abandoned the Tories, as many thought; they were already preparing for the right-wing to lead the Tories to victory at the next election. Portillo was prompt in delivering a speech to put himself on the map in

the midst of the crisis: vilifying anyone who has the temerity to doubt the competence of our rulers: 'A country which places no value on its national characteristics cannot be stable or prosperous for long. Self doubt gnaws at the sinews of our institutions and weakens the nation.'

To rescue Britain's crisis-ridden economy, a vicious attack on the living standards of the working class is essential – Major's 'classless' society is incompatible with this, even as rhetoric. What is needed is a good dose of moral rectitude – the equivalent of Reagan's Moral Majority – the phoney esprit de corps of the morally righteous who will rout today's Enemy Within. And what better than the revival of some old-fashioned concepts which the ruling class always applies to the working class – evil, slothful, feckless, scroungers.

The moral crusade is a particular favourite of the British bourgeoisie. Victorian values were not the product of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert



Michael Portillo—Lurking in the wings

and the virtues of family life. They were the means by which the bourgeoisie disciplined the emergent working class which crowded the cities of Victorian England. Those who did not comply with the new order were an evil rabble who would be forced to follow the 'straight and narrow' through punishment, strict discipline, hard work and the Poor Laws. The harsh reality of family life – its burden falling mainly on working class women – was cloaked with bourgeois notions of love. Moral virtue was not a priority for the ruling class itself – all that was required was that they were not caught out. A conventional ruling class hypocrisy covered up the greed and corruption. Yeo et al made the fatal mistake of being caught out at a time when a new moral crusade is crucial for the Tories. Tim Yeo did not pay the price – we will.

Anyone who expects the Labour Party to defend the working class is living a fantasy. During the last month of Tory crisis, Labour has failed to oppose, worse still its policies where they exist are just a pale shadow of Toryism – law and order, targeting benefits, unbounded grovelling to British capitalism.

In the coming period the right wing of the Tory Party aims to destroy the Welfare State – 'the something for nothing society'. More working class people will go to prison; 'indigent' and 'feckless' homeless families will be turned onto the streets; benefits will be drastically reduced to discourage the 'welfare-dependent'; the NHS will no longer treat 'the undeserving'; disabled people will be re-labelled as work-shy. New categories of the undeserving will be created to join single mothers, working class youth, foreigners, the unemployed, smokers, et al.

If there is, as Mrs Thatcher claimed, no such thing as society, then we will depend on the Family – responsible now for the unemployed, pregnant teenagers, the sick, the old and the mentally ill. If we cannot afford private care then we will have to do it ourselves or do without. The Great and the Good will reap the benefits of low-tax, low wage Britain at the expense of the working class. ■



that the child was conceived during a romp at the 1992 Tory Conference), according to the routine it should have blown over. But Yeo attacked his constituents who took Back to Basics seriously; they put the boot in and Yeo resigned.

The Sun headline had barely screamed 'Off Yeo Go, You Dirty So and So' when David Ashby, MP for Leicestershire North West, was accused of sleeping with a 'close male friend' on a dirty weekend in France, backed up with complaints of neglect from his less-than-loyal wife. This tabloid fantasy was soon joined by the more serious revelation that Alan Duncan, parliamentary private secretary to the Health Minister, had stretched the council tenants' 'right to buy' legislation a bit far. Not a council tenant himself, millionaire Duncan financed the purchase of his 76-year-old neighbour's bijou residence in Westminster in 1990. Lo-and-behold, three years later, the house was sold to Duncan at a snip. Valued at £190,000 and sold for £140,000, the house is now worth £300,000. At 36, Duncan is no ordinary backbencher. Up to 1988 he worked for billionaire US oil trader Marc Rich who now stands accused of racketeering, fraud, tax evasion and illegal trade with Iran. Despite the support of Dame Angela Rumbold, Vice Chair of the Tory Party who was standing-by-him, he too soon resigned to avoid 'embarrassment'. Too late it seems.

Meanwhile Giles Brandreth MP, parliamentary private secretary at the Treasury, partnered by his wife and Dame Shirley Porter's hubby (more on her Dameship below), had cost the taxpayer £200,000 in the form of a venture capital grant from the government. The 'venture' was a tourist scam Royal Britain exhibition which, along with the Royal family, flopped. Brandreth claimed that his experience as a failure would be valuable to the Treasury and, obligingly, Peter Brooke, National Heritage Secretary wrote off the debt.

Oh Yes... Tim Yeo now admitted a second 'love child', fathered in his youth and to cap it all Diana, Countess of Caithness and wife of the

Political corruption in Tory flagship borough



Thatcher and Porter in the good old days for Robber Barons

'From its first day to this, sheer greed was the driving spirit of civilisation; wealth and again wealth and once more wealth; wealth not of society, but of the single scurvy individual – here was its one and final aim.'

Frederick Engels

The real indication of government corruption was not the sleaze surrounding Yeo et al, they were guilty only of intemperance. What really signalled corruption were the revelations of gerrymandering by Westminster City Council. An investigation by the District Auditor revealed that council houses had been designated for sale specifically in marginal wards in the period leading up to the 1990 local elections. The homeless and those reliant on public housing – the least likely to vote Tory – had been shipped

out of the borough, in the expectation that their houses would be sold to Tory voters. This was simple gerrymandering.

The report of the Auditor described the council's housing policy as 'unlawful, unauthorised and to the detriment of local taxpayers'. The disgraced councillors of this Tory flagship borough (one of them is now an MP, another committed suicide after the report's publication) were led by Dame Shirley Porter, heir to the Tesco fortune of more than £60 million, Thatcher favourite, and previously implicated in the sale of Westminster graveyards to property speculators for 15p. (The ratepayers in Westminster were later forced to buy them back for millions of pounds.) From the Auditor's report it is clear that this crew were greedy for power and privi-

lege. Under the guise of encouraging 'self-reliance and home-ownership' they were really ensuring their own continued access to power. Government ministers Peter Brooke and Sir John Wheeler were also implicated in this fraud.

These modern robber barons will be given the opportunity to dispute the Auditors findings, and then may be personally liable to pay back an estimated £21.25 million. It will not be enough. Homeless families have been deprived of a permanent home by corruption. Westminster sends its homeless families to outer-London boroughs where they are licensed tenants with less security of tenure and are forced to pay high service charges.

Every family denied a home by these scoundrels should be compensated. ■

MEXICAN REVOLT OF



On New Year's Day, in the poverty stricken South Mexican state of Chiapas, the world witnessed the opening of a new chapter in the struggle against the robber rich. On that day fighters of the Zapatista Army briefly occupied San Cristobal and four smaller towns. They stated their demands for land, education, jobs, justice and a remarkable operation was carried out by up to 1,000 guerrillas, a proportion of whom were women, and almost all the sons and daughters of Indian peasants. To crush it, the Mexican government deployed 15,000 troops, artillery, helicopter gunships, bomber aircraft and the United States. The International has already accused the Mexican armed forces of torture and arbitrary execution.

seek justice
from tyrannical
governments not with your
at in your hands but with a
file in your fist.
Emiliano Zapata

The Mexican peasants
in Chiapas are
confronting problems
that were faced in
different circumstances
by their predecessors
nearly a century ago.
The choice of Emiliano
Zapata as their

revolutionary symbol
shows a continuity of
experience and lessons
in their struggle against
the alliance of
landowners and capital.
The Zapatistas
represented the most
radical trend in the
Mexican revolution of
1910-1919. They were
the most consistent
revolutionary and
democratic
representatives of the
millions of impoverished
Mexican farmers and
rural labourers who rose
in revolt against the
Mexican landlords and
their international
backers.



The ferocity of the Mexican army, which continued some four weeks after the uprising, is not accounted for entirely by its long traditions of bloody and brutal repression of opposition. This time it was driven by something new. The Chiapas uprising was an expression of the self-activity and self-organisation of the poor fighting for their own social and economic demands. The movement is free of illusions in bourgeois parliamentarianism and is not controlled by counterfeit nationalists who mouth populist slogans for fundamentally pro-capitalist causes. In essence it is a struggle of the poor, by the poor and for the poor against Mexican capitalism and the

imperialist multinationals. This sort of struggle – the revolutionary class struggle – was supposed to have been buried with the collapse of the Soviet Union!

The rebellion: its demands and causes

The class character of the rebellion is made clear in statements issued by the Zapatistas:

'We are the products of 500 years of struggle [against] those who have denied us the most basic education, who used us as cannon fodder and take the wealth of our fatherland without caring that we

have nothing, absolutely nothing.

For the government it does not matter that we possess nothing – absolutely nothing, not a home, not land, not work, not education.'

The movement's opposition to imperialist and multinational capital was expressed by Commander Marcos:

'NAFTA is the death certificate for the indigenous peoples of Mexico ... We rose up in arms to respond to this death sentence imposed by President Salinas against people.'

The aims of the movement are simple and clear:

'... we urge your full participation in support of the Mexican people

LAND AND LIBERTY

Between 1880 and 1890 foreign capital investments in Mexico exceeded domestic investment. Money poured in from the USA and Britain for the construction of railways, silver mines and, after 1900, oil-extraction and the production of coffee, sisal and sugar. A new industrial proletariat was recruited from peasants displaced from the land. This process developed under what was in effect a semi-feudal system of production inherited from Imperial Spain. Nearly half the rural population was bound by debt-bondage to the *hacienda* (a system of massive rural estates) – increasingly under the influence of a global market: a plantation capitalism. The effect of this was to concentrate ownership of the land (by 1894 29 'companies' owned a fifth of Mexico's land area), intensify cultivation and drive the mass of peasants into dependence on smaller and smaller plots, forcing them into the direst poverty and hunger. Villages were depopulated as tens of thousands of families were forced off the land to labour on railways, in mines or newly created factories in the cities where life was just as precarious. In 1908 a day's wages bought one third as much as it did a century before in 1808.

In the province of Morelos, Emiliano Zapata's birthplace, 30 haciendas owned 62 per cent of the land. Between 1905 and 1908 they increased sugar production by over 50 per cent. Encroachment on common land used

for animal grazing and subsistence farming forced the peasantry off the land. Without the means of adequate subsistence farming, many were forced into debt to purchase food; this in turn drove them into the grip of the plantation owners. Initially peasant resistance to land expropriation took the form of peaceful delegations to local and national authorities. But in vain. Often complainants were beaten up by hacienda guards, recruited into the Federal Army or simply murdered by paid thugs.

The Zapatista revolution

The land free, the land free for all, land without overseers and without masters, is the war-cry of the Revolution.
Emiliano Zapata

Emiliano Zapata was born the son of a small farmer in 1879. He was of mixed Spanish and predominantly Indian blood. At the age of nine he witnessed the eviction of peasants from his own village. Incidents of this sort were common in virtually every village in Morelos and much of Mexico. They led to constant battles between the peasants and the haciendas. In the period preceding the revolution small poorly armed guerrilla bands began to form. From this emerged the political force of the Zapatistas which was characterised by its demand for land, liberty and hatred for the wealthy and the privileged.

Zapata's revolutionary career began with his election to the defence committee of the village commune in 1909. He was arrested and forced into the Federal Army as the only alternative to a firing squad. With the conflicts escalating among his own people against the landlords, Zapata escaped from the army and returned to Morelos to lead what grew into the Liberation Army of the South. In Morelos Zapata led a truly fundamental peasant revolution removing the old landlords, confiscating and dividing their property among the impoverished peasants. In unity with Pancho Villa, another peasant leader from northern Mexico, previously insulted, humiliated, starved and degraded peasants rode on horseback from the fields and mountains of the remote south into the heart of Mexico City.

The social and economic programme of the peasant movement led by Zapata was most firmly expressed in the Ayala Plan. This provided three bases for land reform. Land usurped from its rightful owners was to be restored with armed villagers authorised to take immediate possession of these lands. A third of *hacienda* lands were to be expropriated in order to provide communal lands and private rural properties for those who did not receive sufficient land under the restoration programme. Any big landowners or local political bosses who opposed the Ayala Plan would have all their land nationalised without compensa-

tion and two thirds would go towards providing pensions for those families bereaved in the struggle for the Plan.

Additionally, the Plan stated that the revolutionary leaders of the different Mexican states would appoint a president of the republic who would call free elections, a similar procedure to be followed with governors and elections in each state. Zapata adhered to the basic provisions of this plan throughout the revolution despite repeated offers of bribes and haciendas by the series of contenders who briefly commanded state power from 1910-1919.

The limits of Zapata's revolution

The undermining weakness of the Mexican revolution was the absence of a socialist tradition either within the working class or the petit-bourgeoisie. Radical ideology was more likely to take the form of anarcho-syndicalism. In these circumstances the industrial working class and revolutionary peasantry failed to forge a united political/military movement for the seizure of state power. After each defeat at the hands of the peasantry, the bourgeoisie therefore was invariably able to recuperate its forces and reorganise. In the cities and industrial estates, the bourgeoisie isolated the working class from the revolutionary peasantry by building an alliance with sections of the

CO THE POOR

province of Chiapas
battle of the poor
Zapatista National Liberation
Army in Chiapas and
peace. This
guerrillas; a significant
number of daughters of Mayan
peasants armed enormous firepower
with machine guns and rockets. Amnesty
reports that the killing is widespread

and their struggle for work, land,
housing, food, health, education,
independence and freedom, democ-
racy, peace and justice.'

Mexican capitalism cannot even
begin to meet these basic demands. 20
million Mexicans, a quarter of the
population, live in absolute poverty
with no guarantee of survival. Unem-
ployment is 18 per cent and more,
forcing between 2 and 3 million
people to emigrate each year to
the USA. Average food consumption
by the people is dropping and official
statistics indicate that in the massive
slums around Mexico City the cir-
cumference and volume of children's
brains has been reduced.

Y
trade union leadership in return for
minimal reforms. In the rural areas the
peasantry rather than consolidating
their military position demobilised
and returned to their land to enjoy the
fruits of their transitory victory. A pro-
gramme for socialising sugar refineries
was implemented in Morelos. How-
ever, its development was
restricted and confined. This frag-
mentation followed the regional
character of the peasant move-
ment.

The only class which sought to
centralise its power was the bour-
geoisie. To suppress peasant oppo-
sition it resorted to the most
barbaric methods. Whole villages
were burnt down and entire village
populations murdered. With assis-
tance from the US the counter-revolu-
tion murdered over 1 million people.
In 1919 they succeeded in entrapping
and murdering Emiliano Zapata.

The power of the estate-owners had
been reduced, but was still intact. The
1917 constitution undermined the
power of the church. However, in the
absence of a comprehensive socialisa-
tion of the land and with a compromise
struck with the leaders of the trade
union movement, a national bour-
geoisie stood to advance with the revo-
lutionary leadership of the peasantry
effectively demobilised. In 1929 the
remnants of the revolutionary organi-
sations under the control of a state-
bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the large
landowners formed the National

Conditions in the provinces are
worse. In 1993, 15,000 Mayan In-
dians, out of a total of one million,
died of hunger, disease and violence
in Chiapas. Adult literacy is put at 30
per cent. According to the *Financial
Times* Chiapas is 'Mexico's poorest
state, with the lowest levels of in-
stalled electricity, literacy and school
attendance rates in the country.'

All this will get worse with the
Mexican governments' 'economic
reforms' and the establishment of the
North American Free Trade Agree-
ment (NAFTA). A left-wing Mexican
journalist, Alvaro Cepede Neri, has
denounced these reforms:

'The booty of privatisation has
made multibillionaires of thirteen
families while the rest of the pop-
ulation - some 80 million Mexi-
cans - has been subjected to the
same gradual impoverishment as
though they had suffered through
a war.'

Since the mid-1980s, Mexico has
sold over 80 per cent of the 1,155
state-controlled businesses. Most of
the \$21bn income was spent not on
social investments but on repaying
the country's debts to the multina-
tional banks and their governments.
The *International Herald Tribune*
notes that:

'whittling back government-
owned companies has cost
400,000 jobs since 1983, causing
widespread social hardship'.

NAFTA will bring no relief. With the
collapse of Mexican industry con-
fronted by US multinational juggen-
nauts, unemployment and poverty
are expected to grow dramatically,
particularly in agriculture. Mexican
peasants and farmers will be wiped
out by US agribusiness. They will
flood into Mexico City's shanty
towns in search of non-existent jobs
and watch their children play in
streets fouled with factory waste.

Herein lies the true cause behind
the Chiapas rebellion. Capitalism of-
fers prosperity to the few and misery
to the many. As *The Economist* put it:

'The guerillas have given violent
expression to the discontent felt
by many Mexicans who have yet
to enjoy the benefits of change.'

The Chiapas rebellion was no sponta-
neous outburst, no flicker of a dying
star. Journalists who interviewed
some of the fighters heard that many
of them have been part of the move-
ment for 2 to 5 years. The movement,
clearly a product of sustained organi-
sational, political and military work
spurns petit-bourgeois nationalism
or chauvinism and derives inspira-
tion from the progressive legacy of
the Mexican revolution of 1911 - the
legacy of Zapata and the struggle of
the impoverished peasantry and
rural proletariat. Activists inter-
viewed by the bourgeois media spoke
of the necessity to build socialism
and declared that the struggle could
be a long one lasting up to 20 years!

Revolutionary Party. Systematic gerry-
mandering of the electoral system was
established.

By 1920 some of the large estate
owners had been able to repossess land
reclaimed during the revolution by the
peasants. The new Carranza govern-
ment did little more for the peasantry



than make promises. His successors
implemented a series of redistributions
but by 1940 60 per cent of the land was
held by less than 10,000 estates and 50
per cent of the total Mexican popula-
tion were bonded peasants or wage
workers. The amount of land made
available to the peasantry had grown,
but had not kept pace with the growth
in their numbers. The number of land-
less peasants increased.

In 1937 the government of General

Cardenas nationalised the previously
British- and US-owned oil interests to
establish PEMEX. It also implemented
land reforms and a national educa-
tional system. The National Revolu-
tionary Party became the Institutional
Revolutionary Party (PRI) that has gov-
erned down to today. Its nationalist
appeal made it a party of the middle
class at the service of the ruling class.

After Cardenas the PRI dispensed
with any concern at serious
land reform. By the late 1960s
the richest 10 per cent of the
population had in-
creased its share of
national wealth to over
half, while the poorest
40 per cent were left
with 11 per cent.

Angered by this
betrayal, peasant reb-
ellions erupted in
many parts of Mexico
in 1961. One such
revolt was led by
Ruben Jaramillo, who
led 5,000 peasants onto
estates in the south.

Jaramillo had ridden with
Zapata. Then, in October 1968,
the year of student and worker
revolt throughout the world, on the
eve of the Mexico Olympics Mexican
troops opened fire on a student demon-
stration in the Plaza de Tlatelolco,
killing over 200 and gaoing many
more, often for years without trial. The
government blamed KGB agents. A
number of Zapatista-type groups were
formed, linking up with the demands
of the peasants.

During the 1970s major oil deposits
were discovered. This bound Mexico
closer to the USA as its number one oil
supplier. A torrent of debt flowed into
Mexico, set against future oil earnings.

The uprising: they want to criminalise the just

In a period when the leadership of
mass movements has been seized by
political forces propounding a vari-
ety of national chauvinist, racist or
fundamentalist ideologies, all readily
accommodated by capitalism, this re-
emergence of an independent move-
ment of the oppressed must be truly
disturbing to the ruling class. All the
more so because it is no isolated
incident.

In December 1993 an urban upris-
ing shook the Argentine provincial
capital of Santiago del Estero where
thousands of public sector workers,
backed by students and the unem-
ployed, took to the streets, burnt
down government buildings and
cleared stores of much needed com-
modities. The uprising was sparked
by a government declaration that
their September and October wages
would not be paid due to austerity
measures.

Meanwhile in the Indian state of
Andhra Pradesh a rural women's
movement, a movement of the poor-
est has succeeded in forcing the state
government to ban the sale of cheap
government-produced liquor, used
as a means of social control of the
poor. Simultaneously the fundamen-
talist Hindu BJP suffered an electoral
defeat when impoverished working
class Hindus and Muslims united
behind a progressive social and secu-
lar banner.

The Mexican uprising was but the
sharpest and clearest manifestation
of the reemergence of the indepen-
dent popular struggle. And in this
day and age when peasants and wor-
kers are not meant to fight for their
own social interests but become fod-
der for fundamentalists and nation-
alist chauvinists, any independent
movement must naturally be discred-
ited and criminalised.

The monopoly media assumption
is that the working class and poor are
too stupid to prosecute the class
struggle themselves. Such social
action designed to improve the lot of
the majority must naturally be a
product of alien, foreign forces bent
on violence and bloodshed. During

Between 1973 and 1981 Mexico's debt
rose from \$8.6bn to \$67bn, with debt
repayments consuming almost half of
its export earnings. This unsustainable
position produced a repayments crisis
in 1982. Mexico had to generate more
dollars to remain solvent; imperialism
had it in its snare and moved in.

Under IMF instruction state expen-
ditures were cut, subsidies removed
and a dual currency exchange rate was
introduced. The Maquiladora pro-
gramme was extended; maquila plants
can import raw materials and compo-
nents without restriction for process-
ing in Mexico and export to the USA.
The devaluation of the peso and infla-
tion have driven down real wages on
average by 4 per cent a year since 1982.
In 1981 Mexican auto-workers earned a
third of their US counterparts; today
the proportion is less than a tenth.
Employment in the maquila plants has
more than quadrupled since 1982 to
over half a million; a high proportion
of the workers are women.

The expansion of the Maquiladora
programme has not relieved the debt
burden. By 1989 the debt stood at \$100
billion and consumed 60 per cent of
the state budget. The PRI government
decided to open up the country to
almost unfettered foreign investment.
Today, almost every major Mexican
company is interwoven with multina-
tional capital and enveloped in joint
ventures with them. Combined with
this process has been the increased use
of the law to ban strikes, the tearing up
of old employer-union agreements and
the introduction of 'flexible' contracts.
This absorption of Mexico's industrial
economy by primarily US capital is
mirrored in the agricultural sector.

Since 1989 the government has
encouraged peasants and farmers to
sell land. In October 1993 it announced

the days of the Soviet Union, Soviet
Communism was the main culprit.
Today others are readily found. The
Mexican Interior Ministry speaks of:
'an important number of rebels
[being] from abroad, particularly
Salvadorans and Guatemalans.' The
peasants are being manipulated: 'It is
clear that the leadership is in the
hands of professionals of violence.'

Clearly such activists deserve to
suffer a fate described by the *Daily
Telegraph*: 'Witnesses said seven sus-
pected insurgents were bound and
then forced to lie on the ground before
they were shot in the head in the mar-
ketplace of the town of Ocosingo, in
Chiapas state.'

The British press enthusiastically
shouldered its duties launching a
campaign to discredit the Zapatistas.
The Guardian was contemptuous:
'that the Cold War had ended seemed
to mean nothing to the hundreds of
insurgents'. Why on earth it should
mean anything to those who continue
to starve and die of hunger and
oppression, the journalist cares not to
explain. For the *Financial Times*, the
self-organisation of the working class
and peasantry is a contradiction in
terms. The Zapatistas 'appear well-
financed and organised'. This there-
fore can only 'suggest links with drug
or arms smugglers'. With Iraqgate
and the Scott Inquiry such remarks
are more apt for the truly well-
financed and organised British capi-
talist state!

In a world riven by chauvinism,
racism and nationalism, the eruption
onto the political scene of a move-
ment dedicated to improving the
social and material lives of the poor
irrespective of nationality or creed is
a wonderful and delightful thing. Let
us hope that the Zapatista National
Liberation Army not only succeeds in
resisting the Mexican army counter-
attack, but that it goes forward and
forges unbreakable links with the
working class in the great Mexican
urban centres. And meanwhile maybe
the British working class, more and
more of whom are being driven into
poverty, will draw some positive
lessons in the class struggle from the
valiant young men and women of
Chiapas. ■

the removal of price support for crops,
subsidies are to be paid on a basis of
land area owned. This was in keeping
with US demands for compliance with
the North American Free Trade Agree-
ment. The price supports had been par-
ticularly focused on corn and beans,
Chiapas' main crops. Henceforth, farm-
ers will get the same subsidy no matter
what they produce, it increasing only
with the acreage owned. At the same
time the food market will be opened to
imports.

Previously the government paid peas-
ants and farmers 750 pesos a tonne for
corn plus 160 pesos for transport costs.
The international market price for grain,
determined by the US company Cargill
and the other grain traders is 450 pesos a
tonne. Mexican maize production is
likely to lose an estimated 700-800,000
farmers in two years.

Also included in the government's
agricultural programme is the sale of *ejid-
dos* - communal land which has been
farmed collectively by the Mexican
Indians from the times before the
Aztecs. Now in the sights of interna-
tional finance capital, this land is des-
tined to grow strawberries and melons,
broccoli and tomatoes for North
American and European tables or for
grazing livestock which will one day be
pre-digested and served up with
ketchup in far away high streets.

The spirit of Zapata is an invaluable
legacy for the Mexican poor. The fight
for the land was a fight for survival and
dignity. Today, Mexico City has 18 mil-
lion people. Zapata's people, the dispos-
sessed poor, are already there. ■

These pages were compiled by
Eddie Abrahams and Trevor Rayne

RUSSIA

A struggle among elites

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The monopoly capitalist media in Britain and the USA is not happy with developments in Russia. US and European Union government pronouncements reveal growing anxiety about the future of 'market reforms' and 'privatisation'. And to top it, the International Monetary Fund has decided to further withhold credits agreed a long time ago but not yet released. Particularly extensive but superficial speculation about the future of Russia was sparked by the results of Russia's 12 December 1993 parliamentary elections.

Contrary to hopes, those forces – such as the 'pro-reform' Russia's Choice led by Yegor Gaidar – who act as direct agents of multinational imperialist capital, and are working to open up Russia to their exploitation, received less than 30 per cent of votes cast. In contrast the Liberal Democratic Party led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy obtained a totally unexpected 25 per cent and the Russian Communist Party and the Agrarian Party together secured some 20 per cent of the vote. A *Financial Times* headline informed us that 'Russia's reformists suffer severe setback as far right makes sweeping election gains'. Concern has been aggravated by the resignations in January of 'pro-reform' ministers Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov from Yeltsin's emergent government.

The monopoly media and their masters had hoped that Yeltsin's military assault against the previous parliament (see FRFI 116) had definitely buried an aspiring independent/nationalist capitalist force in Russia headed at the time by Rutskoi and Khasbulatov. It was hoped that their removal from the scene would accelerate 'reforms' – a euphemism for the multinational domination of the Russian economy. But to their great consternation, Rutskoi and Khasbulatov now seem to have been politically reincarnated in the form of the Communist Party, the Agrarian Party and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Repre-

sentatives of a potentially nationalist sector of an emergent bourgeois class are today more firmly established than in the old parliament.

Enraged by Zhirinovskiy's success, his opponents in Russia and here branded him a neo-fascist and hurled an avalanche of insults to his name and called for building an 'anti-fascist united front'. The British media judged the Russian electorate to be 'mature' when they elected Yeltsin President three years ago. But now 'the fact that ... people were sufficiently credulous to believe in Mr Zhirinovskiy's ... is a sign of the heritage of communism.' (*Financial Times*)

What the press has not bothered to



Zhirinovskiy

mention is that from the standpoint of democracy there is little difference between Yeltsin and Zhirinovskiy. In fact Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democrats were the only party besides Russia's Choice to support the authoritarian and anti-democratic Yeltsin constitution, which gives him powers to circumvent a popularly elected Parliament. As for Zhirinovskiy's racism and nationalist demagoguery – well, Yeltsin is not beyond that too. The British press was more or less silent about Yeltsin's decrees tightening border controls to stop 'foreigners' entering Russia, about his campaign to clean Moscow of 'blacks' (Caucasian Georgians, Armenians and

Azerbaijanis) or his decree introducing fines against companies which fail to give preference to Russian citizens when recruiting new workers.

Zhirinovskiy's nationalist populism has proved successful in garnering the vote of millions of impoverished and disillusioned electors who were disgusted by the haughty contempt of the Yeltsinite political elite. The *International Herald Tribune* comments that this elite considered itself 'so obviously forward-thinking, intellectually capable and progressive that actual empathy with a downtrodden citizenry was beside the point.' The 45 per cent of Russia's population who today live below the poverty line clearly had nothing in common with this elite. Neither did they have any great sympathy for the Communist or Agrarian Party, associating it with the problems and crises of the past. Zhirinovskiy successfully exploited their disenchantment and on the backs of their misery is building for himself a political career whose destination is not yet clear. Meanwhile the parliamentary struggle between the differing pro-capitalist trends is set to continue, causing continued political instability and economic chaos with the threat of further disintegration and misery for the population.

The losers in this struggle are as always the working class and the peasantry. The Russian Communist Party is communist in name only. Its leader recently announced that the Bolsheviks' greatest mistake was its internationalist position 'that the working class had no fatherland'. It is committed to market-reforms but gives them a more radical, including some communist, organisations boycotting the elections, hundreds of thousands of working class people may have voted for the Communist and Agrarian Party as a protest against Yeltsin. But their vote will not secure them a better future. For this they will have to create a new political force independent of corrupt careerists – past and present. ■

SOUTH AFRICA

What hope for free and fair elections?

CAT WIENER

As the 27 April election approaches in South Africa, attempts to stifle dissent, through incorporation on the one hand, and repression on the other, have intensified.

In January, the Tanzanian government banned the PAC from using the country as a guerrilla base. This decision by a long-standing ally added to intense state and media pressure on the PAC regarding the recent activities of alleged APLA members: at an emergency meeting on 15 January the PAC senior executive decided to suspend the armed struggle. The PAC stated that it reserved the 'right to defend the African people' and called on the South African government to grant an amnesty to APLA guerrillas in gaol or living in exile.

This follows its December conference decision to participate in the April elections, although not in the Transitional Executive Council. General

with Umkhonto and the SADF after the elections.

AZAPO has maintained its refusal to participate in the elections, on the basis that, in the light of the draft constitution pre-agreed by the ANC and National Party, the elections can be neither free nor fair. They are calling for a boycott. Early in December, 39 alleged AZANLA members were arrested in an underground cave. They were refused bail and denied access to lawyers, family or medical attention. A few weeks later, six AZAPO activists were detained in the Eastern Cape. State repression against those who oppose the forthcoming elections looks set to increase.

The National Party and ANC still face a threat to their attempts to enforce hegemony from the alliance of Inkatha and the far right, although Ciskei has announced that it will take part in the elections. While reports continue to surface of elements of the security forces training Inkatha cadres, Buthelezi has warned the TEC that any attempt to send South African police into Kwazulu without agreement will be viewed as an 'invasion' and Kwazulu could not be held responsible for the consequences. The ANC has interpreted this as a 'declaration of war'.

Following her election to the presidency of the ANC Women's League, Winnie Mandela was placed fifth in an internal ANC poll to select candidates for their parliamentary list. Predictably the bourgeois media have greeted this with the usual sordid smears and personal attacks: it is clear however that Winnie Mandela's radical stance and sharp criticisms of the ANC leadership have found a responsive audience amongst ANC youth and rank-and-file. The ANC were quick to demote her to 31st place on their final list.

With only three months to go till the election, millions of black South Africans remain unregistered, 20 per cent are not even aware that an election is taking place. While attacks on ANC leaders make international news, the daily massacres that continue to decimate the black population have become a silent toll of terror and destruction.

It is clear that the elections will be neither free nor fair. What they will do is provide the National Party/ANC alliance with a veneer of democracy which will satisfy the international community that apartheid is over. ■



secretary Benny Alexander said 'the best way to stop the government from going on as it does is by taking over.' By participating in the elections, the PAC believes it will have the opportunity to implement majority rule or cause a constitutional crisis. APLA cadres will take part in a joint peace-keeping force

Turkey's currency crisis

TREVOR RAYNE

The war against the Kurdish national liberation movement is seriously aggravating the Turkish state's financial problems, which in turn is increasing the burden on the working class.

1993's state borrowings more than doubled their projected target to reach 16 per cent of Gross National Product. Military expenditure for 1993 was 70 per cent up on the average for each of the preceding four years, consuming over 30 per cent of state expenditure. Foreign debt has increased by a fifth in three years to now stand at over \$6bn.

This acceleration in borrowing and state spending, fuelled in large part by the war, has lifted inflation over 70 per cent and increased Turkey's trade deficit. In these circumstances international credit rating agencies have downgraded Turkey, seeing it as an increasing liability. This has provoked a wave of speculation against the Turkish lira, which fell by 24 per cent in January, measured against the US\$. This threatens a further push to inflation.

The whole Turkish economy is being touched by the war effort. Taxes have been raised to pay for the debt; bread prices are double what they were a year ago. On 13 January public service workers protested against these conditions.



On Sunday 13 December the RCG led a picket outside the Turkish Embassy to protest against the arrest of 200 Ozgur Gundem (Free Agenda) workers and journalists. Ozgur Gundem is a radical, pro-Kurdish newspaper.

In Ankara they were attacked by police and 100 were detained, five injured.

Resentment has grown at the ending of retirement and demobilisation from the Turkish army. National service for conscripts, which was reduced to 15 months, has been extended to 18 months. Some estimates put the number of draft dodgers at 250,000.

Into this mess step the British and German Foreign Ministers, intent on backing their NATO ally. On his January trip to Ankara Douglas Hurd

assured his hosts that 'We do not believe that an independent Kurdistan is possible', referring to Kurds in northern Iraq and Turkey. He also showed his willingness to extend Turkey's war to Britain, saying that Britain has arrested 66 Kurdish 'extremists', and convicted 26 in the past year. ■

PUBLIC MEETING: Defend Ozgur Gundem! Saturday 12 February, 2.30-5.30pm, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Cuban youth choose socialism

TREVOR RAYNE

Membership in Cuba's communist youth wing increased by 88,000 last year, showing young people are deeply committed to the country's revolution, the leader of the Union of Young Communists said on 20 January.

The Union's first secretary Juan Contino said the group, a training ground for future Communist Party militants, now boasted 550,000 members out of a population of 3.1 million aged 15 to 33-years old.

Contino said the Union should have more than 600,000 members by the end of this year, adding that the figures contradicted suggestions that young Cubans are fed up with the revolution at a time of severe economic crisis.

'Even in the midst of the difficult

situation which the country's economy is going through, there is an undeniable tendency towards increased membership,' Contino said.

In a truly impressive performance under the harsh circumstances of the 'double blockade', Cuban socialism has reduced the infant mortality rate from 10 per thousand live births in 1992 to 9.4 in 1993. This is the lowest infant mortality rate in Latin America by far, and compares with a rate of 8.9 in the United States. Cuba has the highest number of doctors per head of population of any country in the world, and the highest number of teachers and professors. For Cuban society the protection of mothers and children and their education are the real priorities that are not sacrificed no matter what the economic difficulties faced. ■

Rio Tinto Zinc Stinks: II

RTZ is the biggest mining company in the world and Britain's most infamous multinational. In part two of his survey TREVOR RAYNE examines a sample of RTZ's overseas operations, carried out in over 40 countries. British foreign policy is often adapted to meet RTZ's interests.

Global Plunder

Africa

Between 1966-71 RTZ paid African miners under £5 million, but made nearly £140 million profit over the same period. In 1992, 12 per cent of RTZ's 68,298 workers were employed in Africa yet they generated 21 per cent of the £537 million profit. Operations in Britain employing 18 per cent of the work force produced 1.3 per cent of the profits.

Rossing

'It makes me proud to be British.' (Prime Minister Thatcher on her visit to Rossing uranium mine in Namibia in 1989)

Southern African liberation movements and anti-apartheid activists made Rio Tinto Zinc a household name by exposing its activities in Namibia. RTZ's role as the world's leading uranium trader is of great strategic importance to the British state and both Labour and Conservative governments have been willing to defy international laws and opinion to protect that role.

The Rossing lease was bought in 1967. By the early 1980s Rossing supplied nearly half of Britain's nuclear requirements, 40 per cent of Japan's uranium and 30 per cent of West Germany's. Rossing accounted for 20 per cent of Namibia's national product, 40 per cent of its exports and 10 per cent of world uranium output. UN hearings on Namibia held in 1980 heard that, 'Rio Tinto Zinc [is] in the position of acting in many respects as a uranium producing and exporting country.'

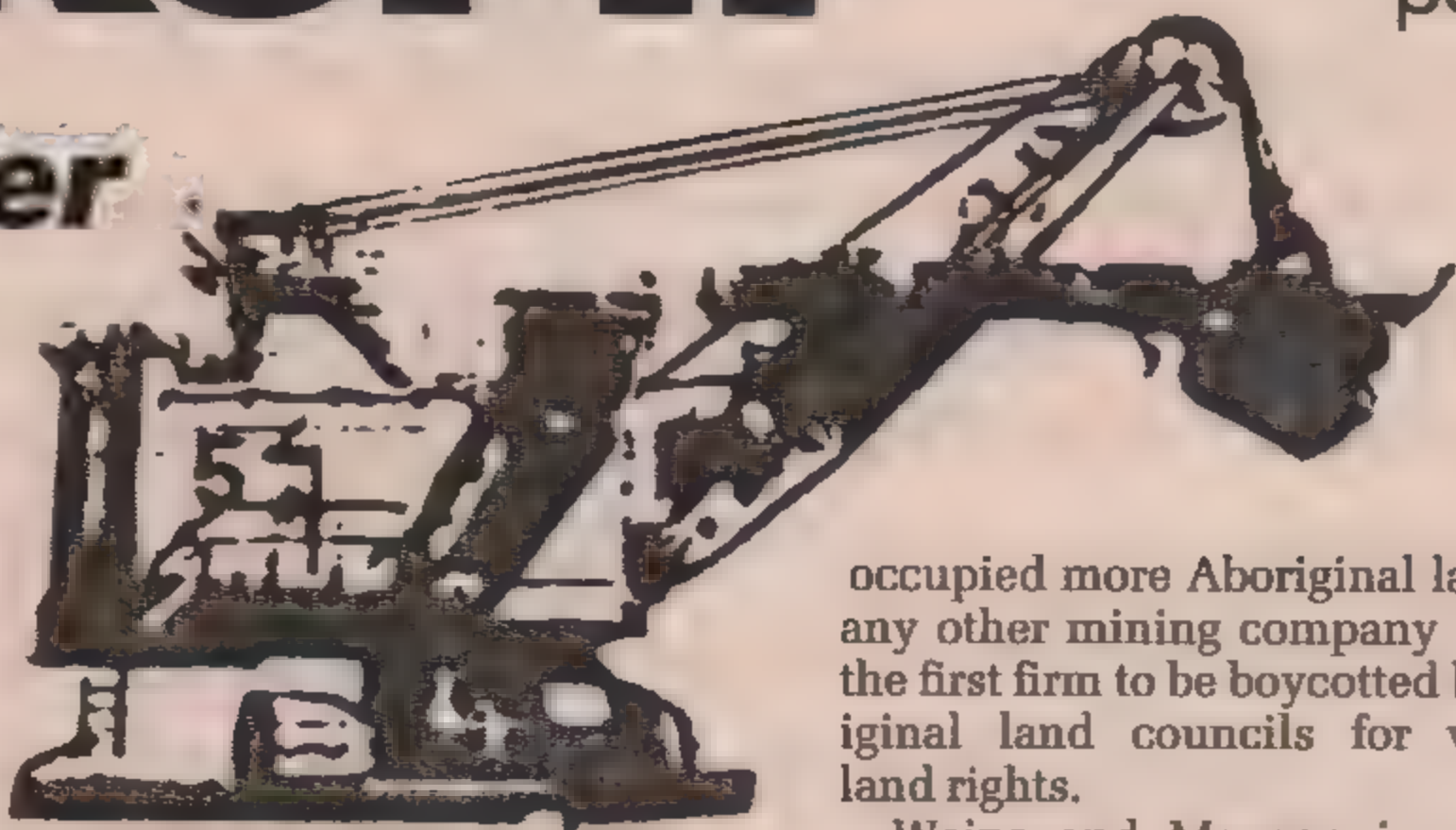
SWAPO (the South West African People's Organisation) declared that all mining rights granted in Namibia after 1966 were illegal. The UN passed its first decree forbidding foreign investment in Namibia for as long as it was under South African occupation in 1974. Former RTZ director Sir Val Duncan said he was 'not prepared to take any notice of what the UN says on the matter'.

Discussions over uranium contracts took place between RTZ and the Labour government between 1965-68. The first contract for Rossing uranium was agreed by the Minister of Technology, Tony Benn, in 1968. Benn says he was 'kept in the dark' about the source of the uranium. When the fact that it was Namibian uranium was revealed in 1970 Benn's political partners saw no reason to end the contracts.

David Ennals, then Labour Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, claimed in 1975 that the continuation of the contracts was in the interests of a future independent Namibia. The 1975 Labour Party National Executive condemned the contract as did the 1976 Party Conference, but the Labour government would not cancel it. James Callaghan claimed that SWAPO did not mind the deal.

About a third of South Africa's uranium came from Rossing; Rossing was central to the programme for an apartheid nuclear bomb. It is also key to Britain's Trident programme.

The British government has been complicit in the imposition of apartheid conditions on Rossing's miners, for instance the use of the South



African Anti-Terrorism Act in 1979 to break a strike with dogs and tear gas (the strikers were protesting at pay awards of £5 a month for black miners and £60 a month for whites). In 1982 RTZ admitted having its own 69-man armed squad to 'defend' the Rossing mine.

Despite RTZ directors' claims that they were opposed to contract labour systems and that miners should live with their families, black workers were housed 16 to a room while the white workers had their own rooms. Africans were placed in separate camps according to their 'ethnic groups'. Migrant workers found to be without their identity cards were automatically gaoled for a day. Injured workers were frequently denied compensation and sacked. Squalid, exploitative conditions remained down to independence in 1990.

Responding to claims that Rossing was producing tonnes of dangerous radioactive waste, RTZ Chair Sir Alistair Frame remarked that uranium mining was no more dangerous than the background radiation of a Scottish city!

South Africa

During the 1980s one George MacMillan who sat on the board of RTZ, ran Rossing and the Palabora copper mine for RTZ in South Africa. Palabora is owned jointly with the Anglo-American Corporation and De Beers. From 1983 MacMillan was a member of the South African Atomic Energy Corporation, the body responsible for developing the apartheid nuclear programme. Today, he also sits on the boards of Barlow Rand, Standard Bank South Africa, Sasol, South Africa Mutual Life Assurance and over 20 other companies.

Zimbabwe

After Ian Smith declared Rhodesia Unilaterally Independent in 1965 and the UN imposed sanctions, RTZ began omitting any mention of its gold, nickel and emerald mines in that country from its annual reports. RTZ, Anglo-American, Union Carbide and Lonrho were the main sanctions-busting mining companies that collaborated with the Smith regime.

In 1979 Lord Carrington, then a RTZ director, headed the Conservative Party's 'fact finding' tour of Rhodesia. He was hosted by the head of Rio Tinto Rhodesia. Carrington negotiated independence in 1979. RTZ's operations remain intact.

Australia

Rio Tinto merged with Consolidated Zinc in 1962. Today, RTZ owns 49 per cent of CRA (Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia), in the top three of Australia's largest companies. CRA has

occupied more Aboriginal land than any other mining company and was the first firm to be boycotted by Aboriginal land councils for violating land rights.

Weipa and Mapoon in northern Queensland is the site of the world's largest open cast bauxite mine, providing about 10 per cent of world capitalism's supplies. After the site



Papua New Guinea Defence Force soldier guards an RTZ mine at Panguna

was bought by Conzinc in 1957 there followed a programme of evictions without compensation. When, in 1963, Mapoon residents resisted the mining company's encroachments and attempted assimilation by the Church, armed police moved in and burned their homes down, arresting the whole community.

Wherever it needs to, RTZ is careful to buy support and split or neutralise potential opposition. Intending to extend its Weipa operations, CRA made a special privileged share issue in 1970. Not everyone could buy. On the first day of trading shares rose from A\$2.75 to A\$5.60. Among those who benefited so spectacularly were Queensland's State Treasurer and Acting Premier, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the ministers for Local Government, Industrial Development, Works, Electricity and Health, and the Premier of Western Australia. Other beneficiaries included Melbourne's Presbyterian church, the Anglican church in Melbourne and Sydney and the then imminent Premier of Queensland and his wife, Mr and Mrs Bjelke-Petersen.

One Australian journalist writing in the *Melbourne Age* in 1976 reported: 'If men ever establish a base on the barren surface of Mars it will look like Weipa . . . acres of dead craters unrelieved by a single growing thing. [Aboriginal] traditions have disappeared and alcohol has wreaked havoc . . . The Weipa operations have caused alarm in every Aboriginal community throughout the north of Australia.'

Weipa bauxite was used in the B-52 bombers that devastated Vietnam.

RTZ, through CRA, owns Argyle Diamonds in Western Australia. Between 1982-85 world diamond output increased over 40 per cent, almost entirely due to Argyle, the world's most lucrative diamond mine. The output is marketed through the Anglo-American/De Beers Central Selling Organisation of South Africa, thereby keeping prices up through monopoly control of supplies.

CRA's Pilbara mines in Western Australia produce nearly all Australia's iron ore and 10 per cent of the world's. They supply 18 per cent of Japan's iron ore imports and are the largest source of China's ore imports. The Aboriginal social structure in the Pilbara region has suffered from unattached white male workers exploiting the Aboriginal women.

Bougainville

Bougainville is an island 800 kilometres east of Port Moresby, capital of Papua-New Guinea. It contains one of the world's largest copper deposits.

An extraction project was set up in 1966, underwritten by 27 British, European and Canadian banks and headed by the Bank of America. They were later joined by Mitsui and Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha. The colonial administration in Port Moresby was offered a 20 per cent stake in the project and in return the Bougainville Copper Company could get any land it wanted free of tax.

Sir Val Duncan called Bougainville 'the Jewel in our Crown'. By the early 1980s it contributed 23 per cent of RTZ's profits while representing only 9.4 per cent of the firm's assets. However, the people of Bougainville resisted the destruction of their land. When surveyors arrived, 'Mothers put babies on survey pegs to stop the pegs being hammered in . . . Armed police were drafted onto the island in 1969 to try and crush the Napidokae Navitu resistance movement against the evictions, pollution and government collusion.

In 1988 guerrillas of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army led by Francis Ona commenced armed struggle. Ona declared Bougainville the independent Republic of Mekan-ni in 1990. A thousand Papuan troops were deployed to put down the rising accompanied by four Australian supplied helicopter gunships. 1,500 people were killed but the mining had stopped and the company left. Sir Alistair Frame told RTZ shareholders that the guerrilla struggle had nothing to do with mining: 'It's a problem between local and national governments.'

Indonesia

CRA owns the Kaltim Prima coal reserves. Kaltim Prima is central to the Indonesian state's 'transmigration' policy: the use of population transfers from the Indonesian mainland to the islands for purposes of political control. With the coming of mining the tropical forests have been destroyed and drunkenness, prostitution and fighting are the common features of a 'floating, aimless, unskilled population with few prospects' according to one observer.

Latin America

RTZ threatened to 'squash' Survival International 'like a fly' if they did not abandon their campaign to defend land rights in Panama.

RTZ has entered into joint ventures with the Brazilian government. A government Indian 'protection' agency issued a letter to RTZ guaranteeing that a project area would be 'free of Indians' by the time operations started. When RTZ bought BHP Minerals in 1989 it acquired 48.8 per cent of the land area in Brazil under lease to non-Brazilian firms. RTZ also has holdings in Chile.

Canada

RTZ has repeatedly denied that its Elliot Lake uranium workings are dangerous to health. The place is surrounded by millions of tons of radioactive waste. Measurements showed workers were exposed to 40 times the safe radiation level. The local Indian population has a high rate for chronic disease, abnormal foetuses and foetal deaths.



Protest against copper mine, Wisconsin 1990

Norway

RTZ has just taken out leases on 40 per cent of the land area of Norway. The area they are interested in is Lapland, home of the Sami people. The Sami people can look forward to seeing potential political opposition bought off, the Norwegian government being handed a juicy slice of any takings, their land being turned to dust and ashes, their pasture and hunting grounds ruined, their sons and daughters uprooted and lives mutilated.

RTZ is an enemy of the people. It claws the land to furnish the arms industry with supplies. Its 'low cost, high quality' philosophy tramples over life in a stampede for profits. That is why RTZ is resisted. The unity of local peoples, environmentalists, anti-imperialists and socialists is a recurring threat for the RTZ directors, but thus far that unity has only flickered spasmodically then faded. RTZ marches on.

This report owes much to *Plunder* by Roger Moody, published by PARTIZANS and CAICA. PARTIZANS are People Against RTZ and its subsidiaries, 218 Liverpool Road, London N1 1LE.

DEMOCRACY and SOCIALISM

Ana Lucia Gelabert is a Cuban communist serving a prison term in the USA. We print below one of her many contributions to socialist journals in Britain and the USA. The experience of the Soviet Union during its establishment and also during the recent period of its collapse highlights the importance of democracy in defending socialism. We reprint Ana Lucia's contribution as an attempt to initiate a debate around some of the issues which will be of importance in re-establishing the international communist movement.



bourgeoisie, and for the new bourgeoisie hatching in the Party's own ranks.

Withering away of the state

What distinguishes the proletarian state from any of its predecessors is that its objective is its own disappearance. It steadily withers away until, at the end, there is no state whatsoever, as social classes, as we know them today, no longer exist.

Of course there always will be a need for government, or the administrative functions of government, more so in the future than today since services are likely to diversify and expand as civilisation continues its progress. But no state, since there no longer will be any classes, hence no need for a class to develop the mechanisms of oppressing the other classes, which is what we mean by a state.

State and government are not synonymous, though their functions may overlap. In any state, public education, or the systematic conditioning of the individual to the needs of the state, is one of the principal means of control. And it is important not just at schools but also in newspapers, movies, radio and TV programmes, even in children's comics and magazines. In the capitalist state, just as in the pre-capitalist feudal state, the Church was the most important means of control. The main tools of control are not violent per se, but economic: the fear of unemployment, of becoming destitute, the fear of the middle classes of suddenly being thrown into the proletariat. The violent means of oppression like armies, jails, Mafia-type thugs still remain, but are used only as a last resort.

In the early proletarian state, state and government are nearly indistinguishable, as the means of production are expropriated by the state and

administered by the bureaucracy. But from that point on, the overlap between state and government *should* diminish and ultimately disappear, as the state itself disappears and only the administrative functions of government remain.

It follows that the withering away of the proletarian state necessitates the steady depowerment of the bureaucracy, so that eventually there are no longer any bureaucrats, but only mere administrators. To accomplish this, the citizens must acquire steadily more control over the bureaucracy, to be able to hold it accountable and replace it at will.

Freedom to criticise

Suppressing or distorting or embellishing news of what is really going on, or limiting the ability of the people freely to question and offer criticisms and ideas, or marginalising or punishing whoever dares to express criticisms or ideas, can only result in the absence of needed criticisms or new ideas from the public forums, the further alienation of the ruling elite and ensuing bourgeoisification of the formerly proletarian state, as happened in the ex-USSR, instead of the gradual withering away of the state.

Grievances and criticisms do not just die out by being suppressed, even if the individuals initially vent-

ing those grievances were to be eliminated. Quite the contrary, they accumulate and build up ever more pressure, more resentment, to explode at some future time with unforeseeable consequences. Which is what happened in the ex-USSR. And which may repeat itself in the United States in the not-too-distant future, as the gap between haves and have-nots continues to widen, anger continues to build up and the people's overall frustration increases.

The average citizen of the proletarian state must not only think that, 'I am the state', but be able to stop in the act any abuse of power, any bureaucratic malfeasance or misfeasance, any injustice, with no fear whatsoever of retaliation.

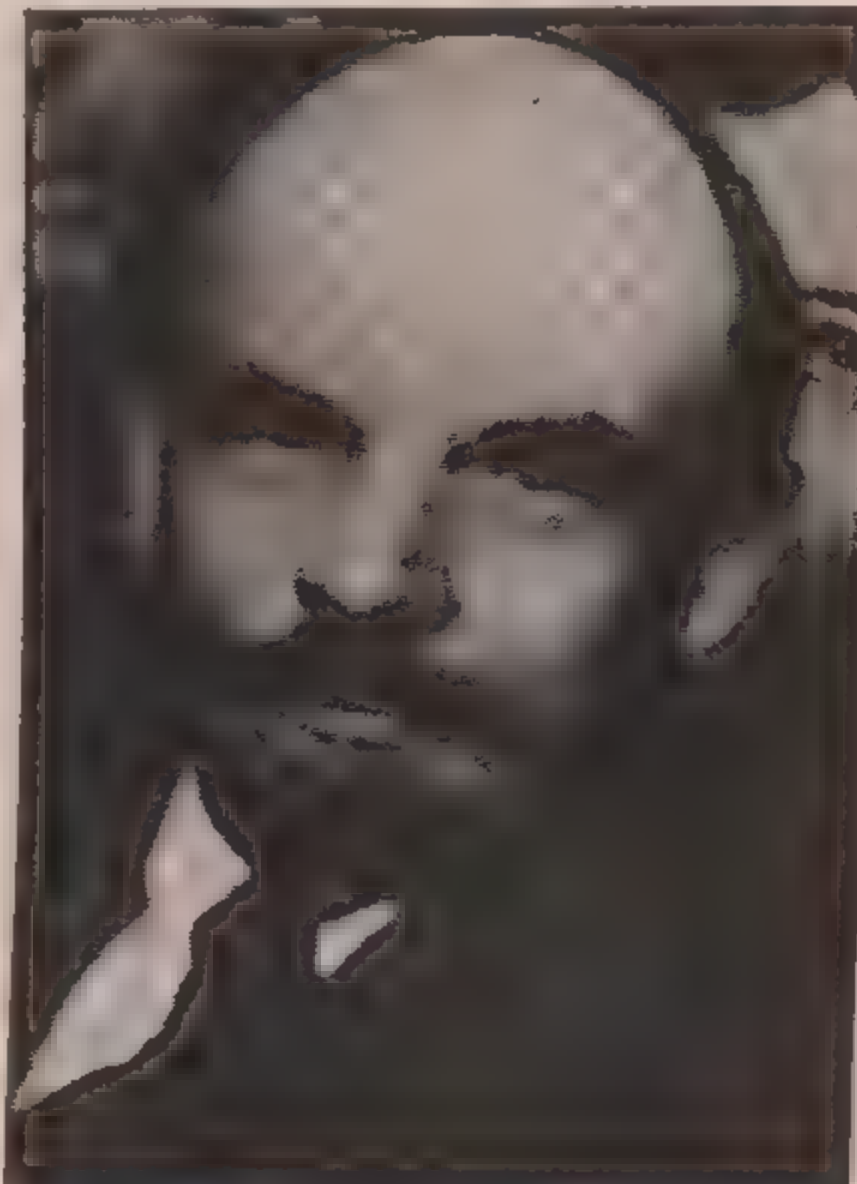
Of course there may arise times of emergency when curbing or altogether suspending democratic centralism may be essential to the survival of the proletarian state. But the suspension is only warranted after the crisis has reached such levels as to make it inevitable, and must not last longer than absolutely necessary. As the proletarian state becomes more established, there should arise less and less crises, perhaps none, warranting even the temporary suspension of its democratic mechanisms.

Consider the beginnings of the USSR. It was the local soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers that provided the power base for the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks' ascension to power. The USSR was founded in an atmosphere of democratic centralism, with Lenin and the rest of the Bolsheviks in intimate touch with the mass of the people. Then came the civil war and imperialist blockade and democratic centralism had to yield to the need to make instant, life-saving decisions by the central leadership.

However, by the end of the second or third five-year plan, by the mid 1930s, all earlier crises had subsided and the rule of democratic centralism should have been reinstated. It was not. Not in any real, effective way, though it continued to be spoken of, rhetorically, as if it still existed. Instead of real power being exercised by the soviets at the base, political power, more and more, was in the hands of a well-entrenched bureaucracy.

Learning the lessons

Today, as we stand before the ruins of the former USSR with the most important task of our days – rebuilding the Communist International – before us, we must draw from the Soviet experience not just the wonderful five-year plans, the victory over fascism, nuclear parity, sputniks, the incredible transformation of what was a very backward and feudal country into a modern nation and a world power. But we must also draw from the negative aspects of the former USSR, which provide us with so much valuable insight into human nature, not all pleasant, but which, just as much as economics, help sharpen the contradictions that move the wheels of history. New insights which neither Marx, Engels, Lenin, nor Lafarge, Luxemburg, Stalin, Trotsky or any of the communists of 100 years ago had access to, and to which we do have access. ■



New Control Regime at Whitemoor

Three years ago the state unveiled its most repressive maximum-security prison to date when it opened Whitemoor prison in Cambridgeshire as a model experiment in US-type 'New Generation' ideas and techniques for behaviour modification of long-term prisoners. Costing £89 million and incorporating all the architectural features of a huge control unit, Whitemoor came on stream with a regime shrouded in official secrecy and a management given absolute power to 'hold the line' against attempts by prisoners to organise and campaign for rights won elsewhere throughout the long-term prison system. The struggle of prisoners against the Whitemoor regime has raged ever since. JOHN BOWDEN, who was a prisoner at Whitemoor in 1992, examines the way Whitemoor came into existence and NICKI JAMESON describes the most recent developments and the current control regime.

Whitemoor – new generation repression

Whitemoor was conceived by prison department officials in 1983 after prisoners at Albany staged a well-publicised and highly politicised rooftop demonstration. The Albany revolt was approximately the sixth 'major disturbance' to shake the dispersal prison system since its creation in the early 1970s and, in its wake, the prison authorities claimed new 'tougher' methods were required to destroy the solidarity and capacity for organisation of long-term prisoners and shift the balance of power once again totally in favour of the gaolers. The results of that process are being felt now as rights established by long-term prisoners over the last 20 years come under attack.

The most immediate expression of the new 'get tough' approach was the permanent locking down of Albany and the total caging in of its inmates; the second was the forming of a committee of prison system bureaucrats (The Long-term Control Review Committee) to explore and oversee the creation of prison designs and regimes based totally on control and repression. US and West German ideas on 'New Generation' prisons and control units were clearly favoured by the Committee, whose clear terms of reference were the eradication of dissent and political organisation among long-term prisoners.

Whitemoor symbolises and em-

bodies one singular purpose and function; the complete suppression of protest within prison. The management and staff operate on the basis that any negotiations with or appeasement of prisoners are completely off the agenda, and have arbitrarily used riot squads and lockdowns to enforce a regime based on isolation, control and brutality.

Fortunately such methods have neither broken the will of Whitemoor prisoners to protest, nor destroyed their ability to organise; indeed from virtually day one Whitemoor, despite all its paraphernalia of control and repression, has experienced protests, strikes, and an almost complete lack of co-operation on the part of its prisoners.

From the perspective of prisoners and their supporters, the regime at Whitemoor must not be permitted to function unhindered or unchallenged. The state must be made aware that such fascistic methods of dealing with prisoners will be resisted and eventually rendered counter-productive and obsolete.

John Bowden

Ever greater control measures

The latest round of repression and resistance at Whitemoor began on 20 December 1993 when C and D wings were locked down from 1.30 to 3.30pm on the pretext of a search for illicit alcohol.

The prisoners on D wing res-

ponded that evening when recreation rooms and communal areas were wrecked and set on fire. Mohammed Riaz describes the scene:

'The ground floor was flooded and littered with broken glass jars. There was a burning mattress on the safety netting which was dripping like napalm and hissing on contact with the water. The spur was thick with acrid smoke ... There was another fire from "Red" spur. Gates and fire doors were blocked on my ("Blue") spur. The MUFTI were amassed by the wing office waiting to charge.'

The wing was evacuated and the fire brigade hosed it down, leaving it flooded. All the communal areas were damaged but not the cells. At 10.40pm prisoners returned to their cells.

On C wing prisoners refused to bang up at 8.30pm, demanding extra time to make up for the earlier lock-up period. At 10.40pm prisoners on one spur began smashing recreation furniture and cells. A fire was begun in the netting and furniture thrown onto it.

Control and Restraint squads, the prison system's riot police, which had been gathering outside, came on to the wing and forced the prisoners back into their cells.

Punishment: formal and informal

Eight prisoners were sent to the segregation unit; 12 others were moved out, including Charlie McGhee (see

FRFI 116) who was sent to the Category A unit at Belmarsh and on Christmas Day presented with a list of charges of assaulting prison officers and damaging the prison. But far more significant than the standard banishing of alleged participants, is the creation of a new unit to house prisoners 'identified as having a realistic chance of returning to the normal regime at Whitemoor' ('Information to inmates' from the Governor), ie those who will join a protest but not initiate one.

Twenty-seven prisoners allegedly involved in the incidents of 20 December were moved onto one spur and the whole of C and D wings reorganised around this. It was made abundantly clear that Blue Spur conditions were harsher than elsewhere but that prisoners seen to co-operate would gradually be entitled to more access to facilities. It was also stated that the 27 were not being 'punished', illustrating once again the two levels of prison punishment: one formal involving charges and hearings and therefore the right of the prisoner to defend himself, the other 'informal' or 'administrative', involving no charges, no hearing and no possibility of defence. Prisoners have fought long battles to expose the abuse of power embodied in 'informal punishment'. As a result of these battles, governors' decisions are now judicially reviewable. It is possible that the Blue Spur regime will be subjected to such a review.

Blue Spur

The new unit quickly became the place where all prisoners considered in any way 'subversive' were relocated, irrespective of their role on 20 December. Mohammed Riaz was not involved in the 'disturbance' but was moved onto Blue Spur a week later:

'I've been told I'm here because either I "did something on Monday or my presence on 'normal' location wouldn't be conducive with the smooth running of the prison". We are on a strict control regime with 23-hour bang-up. The rest of the prison is opened for association during the afternoon and evenings. I have spoken to the governor and he is adamant that it isn't a "control unit" nor a segregation unit. The purpose of it is to hold people who the screws don't like until they're willing to accept the regime without question. We are not on GOAD or punishment (officially) and in my experience it's unprecedented.'

This prison is like a war-zone and the treatment of prisoners in segregation has fluctuated between intimidation and outright brutality. I can't remember a time when there has not been someone on a "dirty protest".'

John Hughes was not involved on 20 December either and was also moved

to Blue Spur the following week. He described the regime to FRFI.

Red and Green spurs are unlocked for meals but on Blue the food is brought to the cells; prisoners are unlocked one at a time and a meal handed in, in a foil wrapper 'like a cold Chinese take-away'. Meal-times are very varied but the day usually begins with breakfast at about 8am.

Prisoners are opened up at 9am for two hours work or education. However, all jobs except those a wing-cleaners and in the tailors' shop have been given to A and B wing prisoners so the choice is very limited. Those who refuse work receive prison wages of zero (instead of the usual £2.50 per week 'unemployment') and remain banged up all day.

After work, bang-up for about 15 minutes, then half an hour's exercise. (A major liberalisation of the regime as at its inception exercise was only every other day.) Dinner time is again very variable. After dinner, bang-up until 2pm, then work, education or, with special permission, gym until bang-up at 4.15pm.

Tea is brought to the cells around 6.10pm. The other spurs are then unlocked for association. Blue Spur is allowed 'limited association' which is not really association at all but means one prisoner can 'visit' another in his cell on request but not more than two can be anywhere together at once.

The spurs are boarded up so prisoners cannot see those on the other spurs. Former Whitemoor prisoners confirm that this was always the intention and they had to constantly fight for the right to inter-spur association.

The reorganisation is permanent, clearly implying the whole thing was planned in advance. The six spurs will henceforth operate as independent units. To minimise the possibility of destabilisation there have been no new admissions to Whitemoor since 20 December and there are consequently empty cells on all spurs.

The emphasis will now be on ever greater control. Any protest of even a mild variety will be seen as 'non-co-operation' and the prisoner's 'progress' towards regaining some of the rights which are continually described as 'privileges' will be set back. However, complete and united non-co-operation with the new conditions of repression will be effectively impossible for the prison authorities to overcome and will further expose the repressive nature of Whitemoor.

Nicki Jameson

High Fashion at Full Sutton

1 December 1993 saw a 'fashion show' at Full Sutton prison. MARK STONER-SEED describes what was behind the glitter.

'Keyhole' began as an idea whereby inmates were permitted – encouraged even – to produce casual clothing on the understanding that after the fashion show the completed articles would be available to individual inmates. A sort of benevolence to give prisoners with little or no outside contact a bit of a lift up ...

While this wonderful new initiative was underway there was also a police investigation, at the request of the coroner, beginning to unearth evidence of a regime of cruelty, notably in the segregation unit where prisoners were frequently the recipients of dreadful violence from the 12 or so warders present. And had those same warders responded to the frantic banging by prisoners who had become aware of choking sounds, when they first began, rather than 30 minutes later, then Jimmy Walker, who had just hanged himself, might very well not have died ...

Well, after endless shorts, sweat-shirts etc had been churned out it appeared the goal-posts were starting to move. Firstly, the clothing in the storeroom was suddenly subjected to increasing levels of scrutiny: checked, counted and logged three or four times a day. Secondly, prisoners in the workshop were told that in future

any inmate who failed to make casual clothing would forfeit his 'allowance'. This extended to prisoners at the gym or on visits.

Thirdly, and most importantly, was the ultimate destination of the clothing. Despite the understanding that the casual wear was for the benefit of prisoners, this was now clearly not the case ... No, the racks of clothing were destined from the start to furnish the shop and retirement of Trevor Gadd, once governor of

Wakefield prison, notorious throughout the system for its dreadful violence and prolonged intimidation.

The run-up to the fashion show was surrounded by unprecedented media interest. I spoke with a journalist about the illusion that Full Sutton was a really wonderful place to live. I asked him what he thought of the fact that half an hour after Jimmy Walker had been removed to hospital, dead, we in the segregation unit heard the warders laughing. ■



Prisoners in 'Keyhole' clothes waiting in the wings before the Full Sutton fashion show

POWs' birthdays

Liam Quinn 49930
HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road
March, Cambs PE15 0PR
6 February

Michael McKenny L46486
HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS
7 February

John McComb 851715
HMP Long Lartin,
South Littleton, Evesham,
Worcs WR11 5TZ
25 February

Ella O'Dwyer D25135
HMP Durham, Old Elvet,
Durham DH1 3HU
3 March



Kevin O'Neill's protest cell at Long Lartin prison. Kevin is serving life for murder and fighting to prove his innocence. After creating this work of art he was moved to Whitemoor but moved on again shortly before the December 'reorganisation'. He is now in Full Sutton.

Double Jeopardy

■ **Double Jeopardy: The Retrial of the Guildford Four** Ronan Bennett, Penguin & London Review of Books, 70pp, £4.99

Page for page this extended essay, which first appeared in *London Review of Books* is an expensive read. However, in every other sense, it is worth it – especially as a valuable record of the lengths to which the ruling class will go to cover its own corruption, to protect its own liars.

The starting point for the record should be an understanding that the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, the Maguires and Judith Ward were put on trial for political reasons. Their convictions were a foregone conclusion. In 1974 the IRA had launched a devastating bombing campaign on the English mainland. To cover the Labour Government's political embarrassment, the bombers had to be caught quickly and if the real ones were elusive then anyone Irish would do. This is not clear from Bennett's account, but it is necessarily the undercurrent.

Bennett's essay documents the trial in April 1993 of three Surrey police officers charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice in the case of the Guildford Four – Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Patrick Armstrong and Carole Richardson. The Four were convicted in 1975 and sentenced to life. Subsequent appeals against their conviction all failed. 'New evidence' forced their release in October 1989. This evidence was well known to the police and the prosecution; it had been wilfully withheld from the defence.

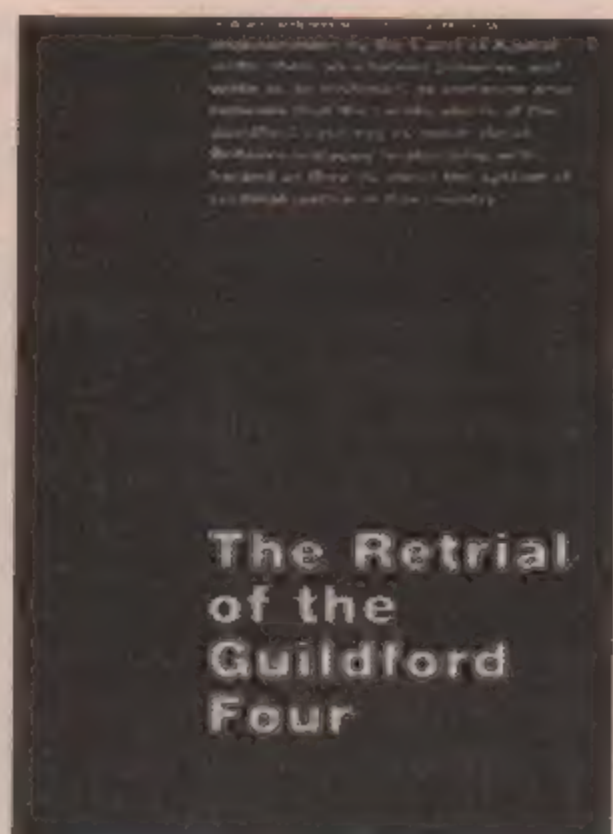
The cover-up of the corruption at the heart of this miscarriage of justice started at the Appeal Court hearing in 1989 when the Four were released. Amlot, the DPP's counsel laid special emphasis on the guilt of the police in withholding evidence from the defence team in 1975. But there was ample evidence that both the DPP and original prosecuting counsel had been responsible for withholding evidence also, and this was not referred to. The 1989 appeal hearing was brief:

'Gareth Peirce [Conlon's solicitor] is convinced that the DPP's failure to defend the appeal in October 1989 was an attempt by the authorities to avoid having to explain in public the misconduct of the police. Not only that. The brevity of the hearing, she also says, prevented the appellants from bring-

ing out what would seem to be the much larger and still more serious evidence of misconduct by the DPP and prosecuting counsel over non-disclosure.'

Almost as soon as the Guildford Four were released, leading establishment figures began to suggest that they had been released on a technicality; really they were guilty. Not least of all Lord Denning and Sir James Miskin (Recorder of London) withdrew such statements under threat of legal action. But the whispering continued.

It was not until the summer of 1990 that the three Surrey police officers were 'invited' to meet the team



appointed to investigate, led by James Sharples, now Merseyside Chief Constable, and asked to explain the rough typed notes of what were supposed to be contemporaneous notes of Armstrong's confession. When charged, the three reserved their right to silence and were given unconditional bail.

A year later, in June 1991, their solicitors made an 'abuse of process' application on grounds of delay and adverse publicity, which was successful in front of Ronald Bartle, infamous stipendiary magistrate at Bow Street Court. No one else gets charges dropped on the basis of adverse publicity – Winston Silcott is a prime example. Six months later the High Court reversed this decision, but in March 1992 the case was adjourned yet again to April 1993! It took three and half years to get these police officers to court. An astonishing delay, even allowing for the reluctance of the establishment to come to court.

When the case did arrive at the Old Bailey, the prosecution was pursued in dilatory fashion by a reluctant prosecutor. Most of the evidence

available was not used. Instead the defence were allowed to use the court to re-try the Guildford Four. Throughout they referred to Patrick Armstrong's failure to appear as a witness as evidence of guilt. In fact, as the prosecution well knew, Armstrong had not been invited to appear.

Three months after his release, Armstrong was invited to an interview with the Sharples investigation. His solicitor Alastair Logan pointed out that Armstrong was suffering post-traumatic stress and being treated by a forensic psychiatrist. It was made clear that he was willing to be interviewed but that it must take place under conditions specified by the psychiatrist. The Sharples team turned them down. Considerable efforts by Logan to ensure that Armstrong was interviewed, but only in a situation which would not harm his mental state, came to nothing. After the three Surrey officers were charged there was no attempt by the prosecution to contact or interview Armstrong.

By the end of the trial, protected by privilege, the defence were openly asserting Armstrong's guilt:

'We say to you [the jury] that the innocent Patrick Armstrong does not exist. He is a media creation, a creation of the ill-informed, the misinformed and those who do not want to be informed ... Can anyone who has been in this court not believe that he was responsible for the Guildford bombings?'

The issue had become not whether the police were guilty of perverting justice, but whether the Guildford Four were really guilty ... and the accused were given no opportunity to defend themselves. In an extraordinary departure from normal practice the judge did not refer to the prosecution case in his summing up. The police officers were found not guilty.

The Police Federation annual conference, 'coincidentally' meeting in Blackpool, greeted the news with a standing ovation. Kenneth Clarke, then Home Secretary, recorded his view: 'I think it was very wrong that the police officers were ever accused.'

It was all much too neat. That is why Bennett's document is important; the unravelling of this miscarriage of justice must not stop where the ruling class would like it to stop. Later this year the much delayed May Inquiry will report. We await its conclusions.

Carol Brickley

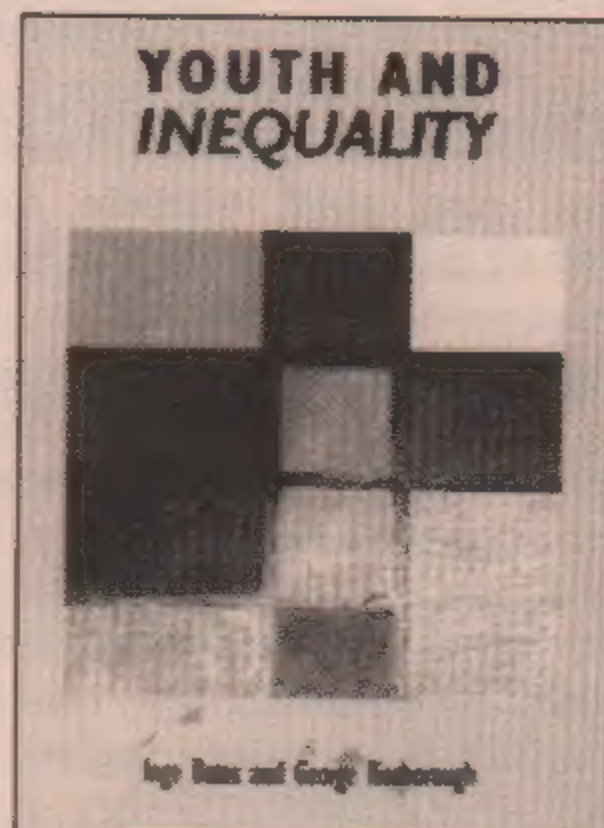
Issues of class and education

■ **Youth and Inequality** Inge Bates and George Riseborough, Open University Press, 1993, £12.99

This book deals with the class system and how it affects the lives of young people in Britain, where 10 million people live in poverty as officially defined. This leads inevitably to a situation where the children of the poor are fobbed off with second rate education and become, themselves, un-

they fail to come to conclusions about anything. I recommend this book to readers only if they are interested in seeing how to complicate simple issues of class and education. A much cheaper and easier way of understanding Youth and Inequality would be to walk around different areas of your city and suburbs, keep your eyes open and talk to young people.

Susan Davidson



employed or poorly-paid unskilled workers. But while the authors recognise that British society is unequal, they do not talk about capitalism, racism or the profit motive. They sense that neither the Labour Party nor official trade union movement has anything to offer whole sections of impoverished workers, but they have institutionalised standing aloof from struggle to such a degree that

War for Oil

■ **Proud Arabs and Texan Oilmen M2 Video** Facilities, The Forum, 74-80 Camden Street, London NW1 0EG, VHS video, 55 mins.

This video, shown on Channel 4 last October, is an analysis of how and why the US hijacked the UN into supporting its war against Iraq. It provides an excellent exposé of the imperialist motives that made the USA and Britain support Iraq against Iran, and then virtually destroy Iraq when its invasion of Kuwait upset the balance of power within the region.

The hypocrisy of the Texan Oilman of the title – George Bush – is captured by his uncritical support for the ruthless Al Sabah Kuwaiti ruling family, and the regime of terror they unleashed against Palestinian people following the recapture of Kuwait. The video makes clear that with the collapse of the Soviet Union the US is able to dominate the UN completely and use it as a fig leaf for its imperialist designs. It also makes clear that the critical issue was not the rights of small nations, but the need to retain a monopoly control of oil.

The film also shows what the war was really like: that the 'smart' technology the imperialists used caused horrific injury, mutilation and death amongst the civilian population; that if there were 75,000 Iraqi army dead, there were also 75,000 civilian deaths.

There are interviews with a large number of people – from the outrageously cynical Alan Clark making clear that keeping Saddam in power was preferable to destroying him because of the uncertainty of the consequences, to Noam Chomsky, taking a principled anti-imperialist position.

The video is well worth watching, and should be used in any educational programme on the impact of the New World Order.

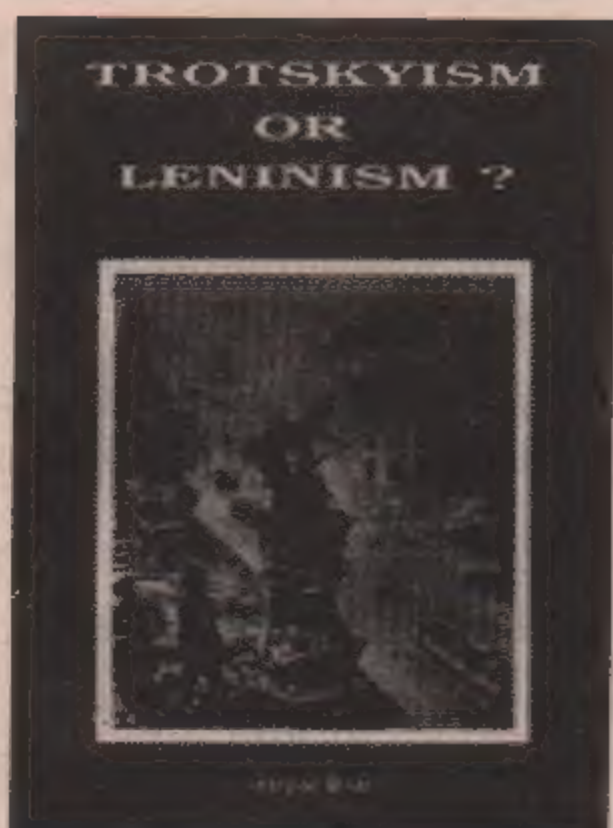
Robert Clough

Trotsky/Stalin debate revisited

■ **Trotskyism or Leninism?** Harpal Brar Available from 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex, 1993, £15

Brar asserts that 'Trotskyism is a bourgeois ideology within the ranks of the working class' (p77). His book assembles a series of articles dating from the heyday of the Viet Nam solidarity movement. At odd points Brar captures the chauvinism of Trotskyism in Britain: 'Ho Chi Minh is a Stalinist bureaucrat. The programme of the NLF is bourgeois', shrieked the super "revolutionary" tourist Tariq Ali' (p355). But the book does not explain why privileged layers are attracted to Trotskyism as the ideological vehicle for their middle class socialism.

What *Trotskyism or Leninism?* does do instead is attack Trotskyism through a reconstruction and defence of Stalin's political record; 'Stalin did no more and no less than apply Leninism to the conditions of the USSR in the building of socialism. It can thus be seen that when the Trotskyites, revisionists and others condemn Stalin they are in fact condemning Leninism, despite any sub-



jective wishes to the contrary that some of this gentry might have' (p164).

In the first part, 'On the Vanguard Party of The Working Class and Lenin's Theory of Revolution Versus Trotsky's Theory of "Permanent Revolution"', Brar is insufficiently careful to show the concreteness of Lenin's position on the crucial questions of the agrarian programme and the class character of the Russian revolution. A serious analysis of this subject would have to first explain the clashes between Plekhanov and

Lenin over the lessons of the 1905 revolution and its ensuing peasant risings. It is necessary to appreciate the dynamic in Lenin's strategy of uninterrupted revolution, which corresponded to the dynamic contradictions between the class forces, in order to see the one-sidedness of both Trotsky and Stalin in their context. In fact both made concessions to Menshevism in the seminal debates of Russian Marxism, nevertheless both made active contributions as Bolsheviks to the workers' revolutionary cause.

In revisiting the standard Stalin vs. Trotsky itinerary: socialism in one country, the Moscow trials, the Chinese Revolution, the Spanish civil war, collectivisation and the mechanics of the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the book sticks fast to its Stalin-was-right line. In each case the reader is left wanting to evaluate the historical evidence and cross check Brar's argument with other sources.

The 638 pages would have benefited from editing, and an index is needed.

Andy Higginbottom

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LETTERS

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Critique conference: the atrophy of hope

Just when you imagine that the middle class left in this country cannot stoop any lower, it finds yet new depths to plunge into. The recent Critique conference on capitalist decline was a case in point. At the end of it, we perhaps knew more about the decline of the left and the reasons for it. First, there is the boredom factor. Boredom is a consequence of lifelessness - intellectual and spiritual. That was epitomised by the opening contribution from Ken Tarbuck, once a prominent radical social democrat who has now matured into an obscure and less radical social democrat. His thirty minute speech was remarkable in that it did not even touch on capitalist decline as it presents itself today. It was a dreary, ill-prepared monologue, delivered in the sort of flat unprojected tone which is guaranteed to cause either sleepiness or profound irritation at having one's time wasted.

This was followed by a very complacent, even conceited oration from Hillel Ticktin, who is considered these days to be a very radical sort of a person. He certainly thinks he is, and from his speech, he also appears to think himself a very clever person. So clever, I am led to believe, he single-handedly predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union. But even more, he had the foresight, unlike almost everybody else on the radical left, to see through the catastrophe theory of capitalist collapse. And why? Because equally presciently, he realised that the key to capitalism's post-war survival was Stalinism. To those woolly-minded few who ventured to suggest that perhaps social democracy was a factor to be considered in this context, there was vitriolic denunciation. There was nothing progressive about any of the so-called

socialist regimes, our revolutionary academic declared - not in Eastern Europe, nor China nor Vietnam nor... Cuba. As this rather prosperous and circumferentially-challenged academic delivered his diatribe, I compared his privileged life-style with the street children of Brazil, the filth, disease and illiteracy of Latin American shanty-towns, and that lifestyle with those of the Cuban people. True, conditions there are not those which a very clever British academic would wish to experience. But Cuban health care, education and housing are in complete contrast to the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America. Because these intellectuals and the bulk of their audience have had all this for free, they take them for granted. Because they see them as of no importance, there is nothing for them to distinguish the social character of the Cuban state from that of any other country in Latin America.

What we witnessed at the conference was not the result of decline but of atrophy - the atrophy of any sense of humanity or hope. Because when Ticktin denounced the catastrophe theory of capitalist decline, he was attacking not a theory but a hope, the optimism that socialists must have that the capitalist system will destroy itself. Then there was John Holloway, yet another one-time radical, confiding that there was no such thing as an oppressed nation. He should know, he said, he lives in Mexico nine months of the year, and sees rich and poor there just like anywhere else! No wonder he could then unblushingly deliver a paper on how the class struggle was really only a thing going on in one's head.

Decadence was the order of the day: bookstalls making a fast buck selling for £15 Progress Publishers books which used to be £5; Joe Quigley, who betrayed the Burnsall strike doubtless felt at home there. In the end, it appeared to be an exercise in narcissism: self-obsessive, self-justifying and complacent. Their

humanity withering in the midst of their plenty, it was a paradigm of the philistinism of the British middle class.

RICHARD JOHNSTONE
Liverpool

Labour council racism in Hackney

May I through your pages draw the attention of your anti-racist readers to an unpleasant - and almost unbelievable - development affecting workers at the London Borough of Hackney?

Although Hackney is a Labour Council, and makes noises about Equal Opportunities policies against racism, sexism and so on, Hackney managers have now taken disciplinary action (two written warnings) against two African workers - for speaking to each other in their own language! This may or may not be direct discrimination in British legal terms, but in ordinary language it's indisputably oppression.

We would be interested to know of any other cases like this, and especially of any successful fights against such policies. Meanwhile, we shall treat it as a totally unacceptable act of discrimination, and one which we hope will be widely condemned.

TONY WHELAN

Hackney UNISON No 1 Branch Publicity
Officer Room 52, Edith Cavell Building,
Enfield Road, London N1 5AZ

Train to nowhere

The fightback against the racists, fascists and their police protectors was visible on 15 January. Hundreds of anti-racist activists were mobilised with the intentions of disrupting the fascist Skrewdriver band's tribute to their late lead singer, Ian Stuart Donaldson. He was killed in a car crash late last year.

Activists had assembled in central London and were rerouted to Barking, east London where the tribute was to be held. At Barking station the 'organisers' of the protest in the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) were more concerned with standing within police cordons, chanting anti-Nazi slogans. They sounded more like the late Winston Churchill's supporters than a working class anti-fascist movement, as these 'Revolutionary Socialists' promised to 'clear Britain of this Nazi menace'.

With this betrayal crystal-clear, protesters, including more progressive anti-racist organisations, took to the streets and marched to Becontree, where the tribute was to be held. As activists took the struggle into their own hands, the ANL were forced to follow suit.

Within yards of the venue, hundreds of riot-clad police blocked the street, protecting the fascists' venue in the true racist British state tradition. With the tube station closed, we were forced to stand for nearly an hour, while the police and ANL leadership compromised for a special train to take us away from the area. This train turned out literally to be a prison as protesters were forced on board. The crowded train, complete with riot police escort, did indeed take us out of the area to Earl's Court in west London without stopping at any station. Some desperate protesters pushed emergency-stop buttons, but to no avail. The police had ordered the driver not to take notice and drive the train.

At Earl's Court we were subjected to a racist assault by the British police. Angry protesters defended themselves against these racist thugs.

Throughout London, other anti-fascist mobilisations successfully stopped the assembling of fascist squads and the tribute was completely disrupted.

In the face of increasing direct actions and militant protests against racism and fascism, the TUC intends to divert this struggle by organising a national demonstration in east London on Saturday 19 March with demands for legislation against racial attacks. Communists must ensure that we build for this demonstration with the intentions of taking the struggle forward against racism, fascism, imperialism and police attacks.

PAUL FOSTER
South London

One law for some ...

On 31 January 1988 I was arrested for allegedly perpetrating the escape by helicopter of two prisoners from Gartree. I was also questioned, stood on identification parade and gave forensic samples regarding an alleged security van robbery in Archway, North London; these all proved negative. During the interrogation of one of my co-defendants the police openly bragged that they would make an example of me, and that I didn't even need a trial - as far as they were concerned it was 'a foregone conclusion ...' Events have since proved this to be no idle boast.

On 5 December 1988 the CPS wrote to my solicitors saying there was insufficient evidence against me to justify prosecution on the Archway robbery; then 25 July 1989 they decided I would be charged after all. There was no further evidence, they had simply changed their minds. The CPS by-passed committal proceedings without informing the defence. They also had my trial moved to Leicester, where, because of intense local publicity surrounding my Gartree trial, the Gartree judge had agreed I could not be afforded a fair trial on other matters.

The scene was set for a further miscarriage of justice: the judges dismissed defence appeals of abuse of process, that the trial should be heard in London, and more general appeals for justice, out of hand. Lord Justice Watkins went so far as to ask my defence counsel if he realised that I am a double star category prisoner, the inference being that I should not therefore expect justice from the courts. To top it all, Judge Smedley ordered at very short notice that the trial should take place at a time when my alibi witness was in Australia. He ordered the witness' statement to be read instead, then destroyed my witness' version of events in his summing up. Not surprisingly I was convicted and sentenced to a total of 20 years.

Barbara Mills recently stated she would not be prosecuting officers of the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad as there was insufficient evidence to justify prosecution. Defending this decision, she stated: 'Our criteria are, and must be the same whether the allegation is against a police officer or a member of the public.'

Clearly that is not the case. Their criteria are now the same as they always have been; one law for them and another one for us. I am by no means the only person facing an uphill battle to overturn a miscarriage of justice. The judiciary are only interested in preserving the status quo, and will only reluctantly dispense justice when placed under an intense media spotlight and sometimes even then they dig their heels in and refuse to budge. Faced with such shamefully long odds of overturning wrongful convictions, we prisoners and our supporters cannot be criticised for becoming more militant in our campaigns for justice. Together with our supporters we must unify, mobilise and activate in the struggle for justice and confront the courts and judiciary directly.

ANDY RUSSELL
HMP Full Sutton

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS

Talks on Ireland: what's peace got to do with it?

Tuesday 15 February 7.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1
(nearest tube: Holborn)

MEETINGS

Cuba: In the frontline against imperialism

with video 'Beating the blockade' and
speaker from FRFI
Tuesday 22 February 7.30pm,
'The Big Lounge Meeting Room',
6 Crescent Road,
Kingston

FRFI DISCUSSION GROUPS

NORTH LONDON

State welfare under capitalism: given in boom, taken in slump

Monday 7 March 7.30pm
Greenland Neighbourhood Centre,
Greenland Road, Camden, London NW1
(Nearest tube: Camden Town)

SOUTH LONDON

The decline of the welfare state

Tuesday 1 March 7.30pm

Sex, sleaze and superguns

Tuesday 15 March 7.30pm
Tel: 071 837 1688 for venue

BLACKBURN

The New Warlords - book launch and public meeting

Saturday 12 March 1pm
The Fielding Room, Central Library,
Town Hall Street, Blackburn

MANCHESTER

Eyewitness report from Turkey

Wednesday 23 February 7pm
Black Resource Centre, Old Library
Building, Cheetham Hill Road,
Manchester 8

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Saturday 19 March at 8pm
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ERRATUM

In FRFI 116 the article 'The State and Revolution' has a quote which begins: 'The distinction between the Marxists and the anarchists is this ...' The quote should have included the third point of distinction: '3. The former demand that the proletariat be trained for revolution by utilising the present state. The anarchists reject this.'

Apolitical Intellectuals

by Otto René Castillo

I

One day the apolitical intellectuals of my country will be interrogated by the simplest of our people. They will be asked what they did when their nation died out slowly, like a sweet fire, small and alone. No one will ask them about their dress, their long siestas after lunch, no one will want to know about their sterile combats with 'the idea of the nothing'. No one will care about their higher financial learning. They won't be questioned on Greek mythology or regarding their self-disgust when someone within them begins to die the coward's death. They'll be asked nothing about their absurd justifications born in the shadow of the total lie.

II

On that day the simplest men will come, those who had no place in the books and the poems of the apolitical intellectuals, but daily delivered

their bread and milk,
their tortillas and eggs,
those who mended their clothes,
those who drove their cars,
who cared for their dogs and gardens
who worked for them,
and they'll ask:
'What did you do when the poor suffered, when tenderness and life
burned out in them?'

III

Apolitical intellectuals
of my sweet country,
you will not be able to answer.
A culture of silence
will eat your guts.
Your own misery will gnaw at your souls.

And you will be mute
in your own shame.

translated by Margaret Randall

Otto René Castillo (1936-1967) was a Guatemalan poet and revolutionary. A student activist and organiser, he was exiled for the first time in 1954 at the age of 17, shortly after the CIA-engineered coup that deposed Jacobo Arbenz. Imprisoned and exiled several times over the next decade, he founded an experimental theatre group, edited radical student newspapers and published two books of poetry. In 1966 he was exiled again by the government of President Peralta Azurdita. He returned to Guatemala to join the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). In March 1967 his guerrilla group was ambushed and Castillo and one of his comrades were captured, brutally tortured for four days, and finally burned alive. His poetry remains an unequivocal testimony to his revolutionary commitment to the liberation of Guatemala to which he dedicated his life.

WOMEN — time for the real fight

- women's wages are 78% of men's
- nearly 5 million women live in poverty
- one in 10 women suffers from domestic violence

The event which has caused the most fury amongst British feminists in recent years was a debate on the work of the latest representative of the US-bimbo school of feminism, Katie Roiphe. Their biggest complaint was that no prominent British feminists were allowed to speak. The *Guardian* Women's page carried a hugely indignant article by Linda Grant: '... It was as if 20 years of British feminism had never existed. ...' Well, for the majority of women, it might as well not have done. For 25 years the concerns of middle class women have dominated what passes for the women's movement in Britain.

Amongst the 'prominent feminists' listed by Linda Grant are: Bea Campbell, Glenys Kinnock, Teresa Gorman, Clare Short and Julie Burchill. Rather than being given more of a hearing, these fraudster feminists ought to be given the boot.

While this globe-trotting and media-hungry minority of well-heeled feminists have seen their incomes and living standards rise over the last decade, for the vast majority of women, capitalism has provided an unmitigated and intensified catalogue of misery.

Drudgery at work ...

Far from liberating women, the massive growth in female employment has in fact entrenched women's position as a cheap and flexible source of labour. Women make up nearly 50 per cent of the workforce — eight out of every nine jobs created since the beginning of the 1980s have gone to women — yet their average wages are just 78 per cent those of men. It is a bitter indictment of establishment feminism that more than 20 years after the introduction of equal pay legislation, women have still not achieved pay parity with men. Women form 74 per cent of the low-paid: in the 'catering, cleaning, hair-dressing and other per-

sonal services category' where 21% of full-time women workers are employed, 82% earn less than £160 per week; in the clerical sector, the figure is 56%: the pattern is repeated in the other traditional sectors of education, welfare, health and retail.

For while at one end of the earning scale, middle class women have gained greater access to managerial posts, and have seen their wages rise, the majority of women remain concentrated in low-wage, low-skill jobs. In the civil service, 50 per cent of the workforce is female; yet three quarters of the lowest grade positions are filled by women, compared with 6% of the top grade; the health service labour force is 70% female — yet women form only 25 per cent of doctors. Meanwhile, the Clare Short and Teresa Gorman of this world focus on a hugely expensive Saatchi & Saatchi advertising campaign to remind us that there are only 19 female British MEPs. For all the concern they have shown for the realities that govern most women's lives, there might as well be none.

... and in the home

Women perform more than 80 per cent of all household duties, spend an average of 65 hours a week on child care, and form more than two thirds of

time employment to have children usually return to part-time jobs, often at lower skill levels.

The lack of affordable, accessible child care hits hardest the growing number of lone parents: whether, divorced, separated, widowed or never married, single parents — the vast majority of them women — make up one of the poorest sections of the population. Two thirds of single parents are on income support; nearly half of all single parents have a gross weekly income of less than £100 a week. Only 22 per cent of single parents have jobs, and only 8 per cent have full time jobs. Private child-care is a luxury for the middle-classes: most women who work are forced to rely on informal arrangements with friends and relations, or leave their children alone at home, worrying throughout the day, phoning home every ten minutes, panic-stricken in case some social worker pokes their nose through the blinds and launches the latest 'home-alone' witch-hunt. Every morning, hundreds of thousands of women get up at 4.30am to get their cleaning jobs done before getting home to get the children off to school (and, often, going on to their second job of the day); the *Guardian* women's page, meanwhile, appears more concerned about how hard it is to get a good nanny these days.

Bearing the brunt of the crisis

Women have borne a disproportionate burden of the government's assault on the welfare state. Given women's longer life expectancy, they form the majority of the elderly — two-thirds of the population aged over 70 are women. They are therefore amongst those most affected by the freezing of pensions, overall poverty for the elderly, VAT on fuel and cuts in services such as meals on wheels. In addition, given the disruption to women's working lives of bearing and raising children, they are less able to provide for their old age. Four million women are dependent on pensions derived from their husbands' pensions. On top of all this, women will now have to work five years longer than previously to qualify for statutory benefit.

57 per cent of lone parents live in council housing — many of them, particularly young mothers, on some of the worst and most run-down housing stock in Britain. Often stranded on the outskirts of cities, women in areas such as Easterhouse, near Glasgow, have to pool funds to be able to afford the weekly bus fare to the nearest shops.

It has become fashionable for the women's pages of newspapers and magazines to carry articles by men — of the 'I was seduced/battered/had to pay child maintenance too' school which always seem to carry with them the assumption that somehow feminism has gone far enough. Without suggesting that men do not suffer too in the miserable capitalist society

we live in, it is worth having a sense of proportion. Women suffer from sexual abuse: 54% of women last year reported being sexually harassed at work. In 1992, the No Means No campaign conducted a survey of female students, asking them if they had ever been raped: 10 per cent of the women asked said they had, and a further 10 per cent reported attempted rape. Sexual crimes against women are on the increase. Yet a judge can still direct a jury: 'Women who say no do not always mean no ... If she doesn't want it she only has to keep her legs shut.' Men who attack women get off notoriously lightly — a man who who strangled his wife because she had been having an affair was told, as he received his four-year sentence for manslaughter, 'for nearly 25 years you were a good husband and your wife let you down'. Women driven to the end of their endurance by a partner's violence, emotional abuse and cruelty find little sympathy from the judiciary: Sarah Thornton is today serving a life sentence. Yet domestic violence represents 25 per cent of all reported assaults, a figure which is likely to be an underestimate, since on average a woman will endure seven years of battery before reporting it to the police or moving out. Hardly surprising given that 50 per cent of wives have a personal income below the level of income support; moving out can mean, as in the case of one battered woman, sleeping on park benches with her two children for weeks before she could gain access to a hostel. The middle-class feminists who whinge on about the vagaries of their men have a rather less costly choice to make.

A programme for action is needed

The state's attacks on women are set to intensify: plans have been floated to bring in New Jersey-type welfare cuts for single mothers, and to incarcerate pregnant teenagers in work-house-type hostels. Next year, new maternity laws will come into force which will allow for women to be dismissed if they take more than 14 weeks maternity leave. British leave and maternity pay — £52.50 a week — is already the lowest in the EC. Surely these issues have rather more popular resonance than a campaign to get more women MPs into parliament — where, if they were up to anything, you would think they would at least have organised a creche on their own behalf by now.

There are real and pressing issues that we need to address. 92 per cent of teenage pregnancies are unplanned, which is not surprising given the number of family planning clinics that have been closed down and the absence of any compulsory or useful sex education in schools — courtesy of the same government that pontificates about the fecklessness of young single mothers. Yet the main outrage of the so-called feminist movement in recent years has been reserved for issues like the lack of women Oxford University professors. There is nothing to be done with them and nothing that can come from them that can begin to confront the bleak reality we face. What is needed is a campaigning women's movement based on the real concerns of working class women: good housing, affordable childcare, decent welfare benefits and public services, unionisation of low-paid and part-time workers, contraception and abortion advice and availability, genuine and effective protection for women and children against male violence. These are quite simple, basic things that a women's union, for example, could unite women around and begin to transform our lives and the society we live in.

Cat Wiener

If there are any women out there who want to take up these issues and form a women's union, we would like to hear from you.

